

TORIES AND THE LAW

Crackdown targets violence and burglaries

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES
Political Correspondent

Michael Howard's proposals, outlined to the Tory Party conference yesterday, would see the end of automatic early release for prisoners, a tough new sentencing regime for violence and sex offences and, for the first time, minimum sentences for burglars and hard drug dealers.

To the longest standing ovation of the conference so far, the Home Secretary declared that

THE PROPOSALS

under White Paper proposals covering England and Wales, to be published next year, "model prisoners" would get a little time off their sentences for good behaviour.

"Everyone else should serve their sentence in full... no more half-time sentences for full-time crimes," Mr Howard said. The final shape of the crackdown will be decided after consultation on the as yet uncoded

White Paper, and included in a Crime Bill in the parliamentary session after next.

But under radical new proposals for the sentencing of serious violent and sexual offenders, Mr Howard said there was a "strong case" for saying that anyone convicted for the second time should automatically receive a life sentence. These prisoners would only be released when they no longer posed a risk to the public, Mr Howard said, adding: "If

they continued to pose a risk, life really would mean life."

The White Paper will suggest that burglars and hard-drug dealers be subject to minimum sentences on a third offence - reflecting the American "three strikes and you're out" policy. Mr Howard said: "Burglary is a foul crime. It defiles people's memories." He added: "The same is true of dealers in hard drugs. They prey on the young, the lonely and the vulnerable."

Police Superintendents' Association annual conference that he was "surprised" at a survey showing that only 10 per cent of first-time burglars were jailed by magistrates' courts. In Crown Courts the average sentence for burglars with 10 or more previous convictions was 17.6 months. A new minimum is likely to be several years more. The move could bring some lower sentences, because of the abolition of early release and because some might sentence at

the minimum. While conceding that risk at a briefing for journalists, Mr Howard insisted that the overall effect would be stiffer sentences. At present, the only minimum sentences are the mandatory life sentence for murder and the one-year automatic ban for drink-driving.

The maximum sentence for serious violent and sexual crimes is life imprisonment. But, said Mr Howard, offenders did not always get life, and could offend again. Under the

Home Secretary's proposals, the net would be spread widely, imposing a life sentence for second offences of attempted murder, manslaughter, infanticide, and manslaughter due to diminished responsibility.

The same would apply to wounding or any other act which endangers life, rape, going to a crime equipped with a weapon, and unlawful sexual intercourse or incest with a girl under 13.

Under current rules on the release of prisoners, offenders jailed for less than four years are automatically released after serving half their sentence. Those serving more can be released at the half-way point and, if not, are automatically released on licence at the two-thirds point. Mr Howard proposes to sweep that away, replacing it with strictly limited, and earned, remission of 15 per cent of the sentence for model behaviour.

Portrait of a judge: Controversy has followed the legal chief who sought the common touch

Liberal approach of a man used to courting trouble

JASON BENNETTO

With nearly 40 years experience as a street-wise criminal lawyer from the north of England Lord Taylor, the Lord Chief Justice, is used to confrontation.

Drawing on his own roots - he comes from a Jewish family in Newcastle, where his father was a doctor - he has tried to distance himself from the popular view of the judiciary as establishment, and therefore conservative, minded. He has always thought his Jewish background helped make him more sympathetic and liberal. Asked why he thought he had become Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor, 66, said: "I would like to think that I am not thought to be, rightly or wrongly, wholly out of touch - that I am in the mainstream of life in the country."

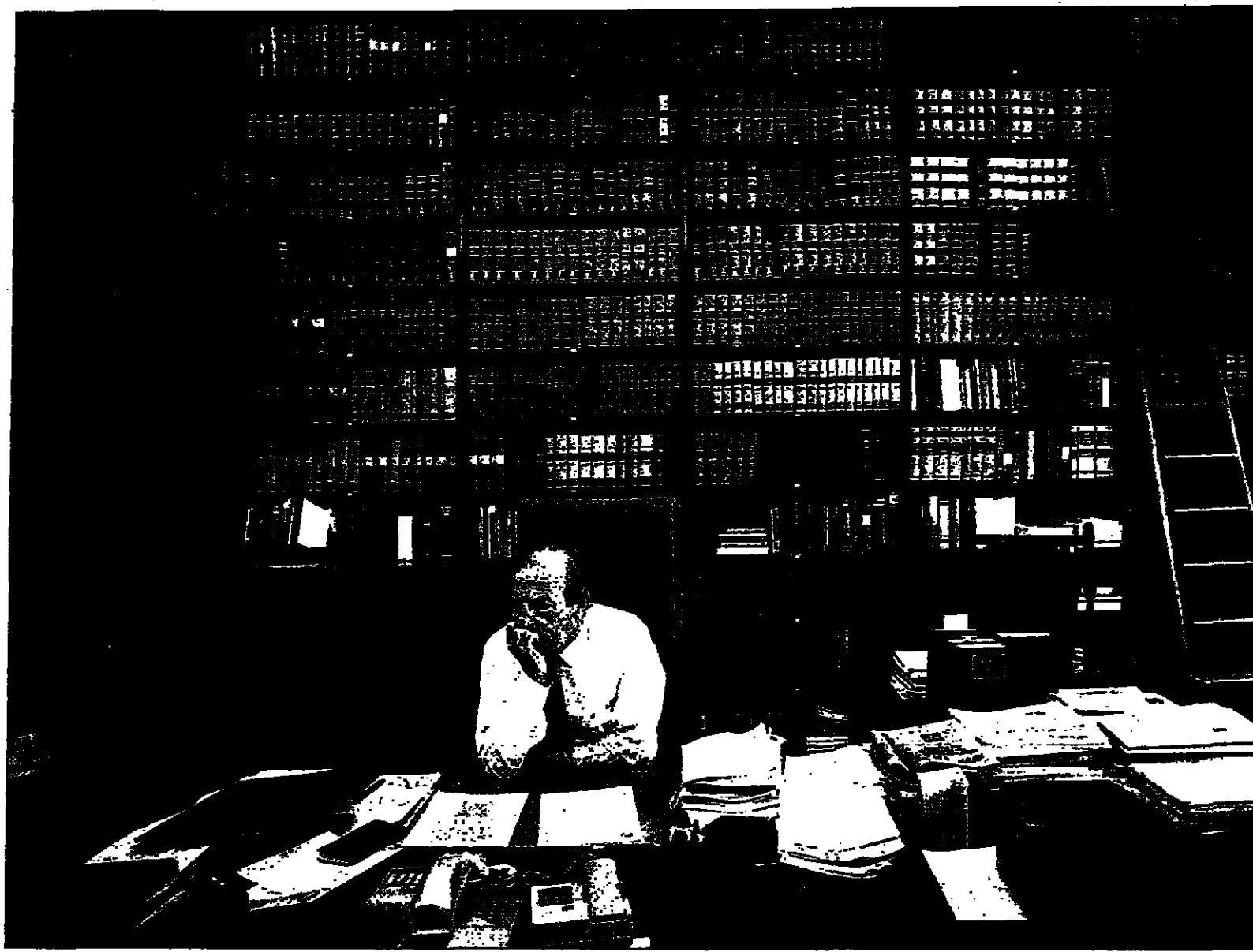
Peter Taylor was educated at a Newcastle's Royal Grammar school he won a scholarship to go to Cambridge University.

He was called to the Bar in 1954, and as a barrister, prosecuted some high profile trials including those of the corrupt property developer, John Poulson, and the former Liberal leader, Jeremy Thorpe.

He became a High Court judge in 1980 and an Appeal Court judge in 1988 until he became Lord Chief Justice. He headed the inquiry into the Hillsborough disaster in 1989. A keen supporter of Newcastle's rugby and football teams, was able to reflect on his own recollection of the terraces and fear of being hemmed in.

Since his appointment in 1992 as the second most powerful member of the judiciary after the Lord Chancellor, he has done much to open up his new post to public scrutiny and has allowed unprecedented media access.

Lord Taylor of Gosforth, who is also the head of the court



Sitting in judgment: The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor, in his London office yesterday

Photograph: John Voss

of criminal appeal, has already had a number of public spat over government policy. He chided them for their proposals restricting a suspect's right to silence and criticised the delay in setting up a review body for miscarriages of justice. Ironically it was also Lord Taylor who criticised the "penologists, criminologists and bureaucrats in government departments", whom he blamed for the Criminal Justice Act 1991 which prevented the judges from sending persistent offenders to prison.

Lord Taylor is also robust in his calls for the legal profession to move with the times. He recently gave women barristers permission to wear trousers in court and is keen for the profession to be open to anyone.

While considered something

of a liberal compared to his predecessor Lord Lane, he still has a reputation for being very tough and has been criticised for making conservative appointments and has refused to change the judicial appointments' system, which is still carried out in secret.

Yesterday he attended the memorial service of his wife, Irene, who died in July after a long illness. He has three daughters and one son.

When not wrapped up in the rigours of the legal world he enjoys playing the piano and until the age of 17 fostered ambitions to become a concert pianist. He told one interviewer: "It enables me to express feelings at the keyboard which would be quite inappropriate on the Bench, so it's a contrast, I suppose."

Lord Taylor's statement in full

Lord Taylor's statement in full. The statement is a response to the proposals for sentencing reform, which are set out in the White Paper on Sentencing, published in 1993.

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The sentencing framework which the courts apply is contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1968 and 1993.

There are maximum sentences of life imprisonment for rape and drug trafficking, and 14 years for domestic burglary (though this Government has recently reduced the penalty for burglary of non-residential premises from 14 years to 10 years).

Judges apply this framework consistently, but must be able to fit the particular punishment to the particular crime if justice is to be done.

Minimum sentences are inconsistent with doing justice according to the circumstances of each case. Instead of fixed minimum sentences, the police should be empowered to bring criminals before the courts in the first place.

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Delegates drool over tough line

PATRICIA WYNN DAVIES

Two, or three, strikes and you're out - reflecting the American approach to repeat offenders - served Michael Howard well yesterday, ensuring one of the smoothest rides ever for a Home Secretary at a Tory conference.

Delighted representatives streamed out of the debate repeatedly declaring that the Home Secretary had made a "wonderful" speech, with the only complaint being that he had not yet introduced compulsory identity cards.

One delegate, Alistair Glanville, from Wells, was booed by some representatives for speaking out against them. Mr Howard said later that consultation on the proposal had only finished a fortnight ago.

Yesterday's announcements meanwhile spawned high praise. Daniel Walton, from Broxbourne, said: "It was an impressive speech. I am disappointed he didn't mention identity cards because that would be a tremendous way forward. But the idea of minimum sentences should be extended to magistrates' courts so they are consistent nationally, and it should be extended to other offences." Like other representatives, Mr Walton applauded

CONFESSIONS IN ACTION

the abolition of automatic early release, adding: "There should be corporal punishment and hanging, certainly for planned murders." He added: "We have always been tough on crime. It is not something we have found as an electoral promise, like Tony Blair."

Balwant Singh Bahra, from Coventry South, said Mr Howard had made a "wonderful" speech, promoting law and order. Five years should mean five years, he said. He was unimpressed by the criticisms of Lord Taylor, the Lord Chief Justice. "The Government has to frame the law. The judges follow the law," he said.

But if representatives were inclined to ignore Lord Taylor's call for more money for the police to catch criminals, there were concerns about the costs of a rising jail population. Sophia Taylor, of West Lancashire, said the speech was "wonderful and very necessary" but added: "How will they pay to put them in prison?"

Barbara Couchman, a JP voiced concerns about a dramatically scaled down remission system. "There must be hope of coming out and incentives to good behaviour."

Labour attacks 'bizarre mix'

HEATHER MILLS

OPPOSITION

Home Secretary Michael Howard's latest anti-crime package was widely condemned by the opposition and virtually all in the criminal justice system, including judges, lawyers and prison staff.

Jack Straw, shadow home secretary said Mr Howard's speech was "a bizarre mixture" of complacency and desperation. "He was complacent about the level of recorded crime, which has more than doubled under the Tories, and desperate because he knows that the Tories are no longer trusted on law and order."

Alan Beith, Liberal Democrat home affairs spokesman said Mr Howard's proposals were "merely window-dressing" for the party faithful. Echo-

ing Lord Taylor, the Lord Chief Justice, he condemned the Government over the high level of crime that was not being cleared up. "There was not a word about providing more police officers to tackle crime and catch criminals," Mr Beith protested.

The main criticism was the inherent danger in taking away judges powers to fix sentences - thereby denying them the ability to hand out different punishments to reflect the differing severity of a crime. But the second was that the uncoded plans would lead to a massive leap in the prison population which, at over 52,000 - the highest in Europe, is already bursting at the seams.

The end of remission was likely to lead to an increase of 15,000 on a daily basis, the clampdown on burglars could lead to a further 5,000.

Research has shown that locking up so many extra people would only lead to less than a two-per-cent drop in crime - but the costs of building and running the new jails would run into billions.

Prison staff were fearful that the ending of remission would mean there was no incentive for prisoners to behave. Confronted with problems of overcrowding, it could provide the explosive mix which led to the riots at Strangeways.



Critics: Jack Straw

Rift marks new low in confrontational relationship

The Lord Chief Justice's extraordinary public condemnation of the Home Secretary's latest "lock 'em up" initiative, marks an all-time low in their relationship.

Judges guard their independence jealously and it will have been Michael Howard's threat of yet more fetters on discretion that most upset Lord Taylor.

Coming at a time, when judges and the Lords are anxious to abolish the mandatory life sentence for murder - saying it is unfair to sentence a terrorist to the same penalty as a battered wife who kills - it is not surprising that Lord Taylor

Analysis

spoke out at the imposition of yet more curbs on their scope to reflect differences in crime through sentencing.

What is surprising is that he cast his critical net far more widely to include criminal justice policy generally. His was the loudest voice, among many, to say more resources need spending on detection and policing rather than incarceration. "I do not believe that the threat of longer and longer periods of imprisonment across the board will

deter habitual criminals," he said. "What deters them is the likelihood of being caught, which at the moment is small."

As the head of the Court of Appeal and the country's most senior professional judge, he will not have been speaking simply for himself, when he launched his attack. He had taken advice from other senior judges and been assured of their support.

Despite Mr Howard's public dismissal of Lord Taylor's comments last night, the Home Secretary must be worried by the ferocity of the attack. Lord Taylor is very influential in the House of Lords. His support for

the controversial decision to erode the right to silence was crucial to the success of last year's Criminal Justice Act. But he was also instrumental in watering down its impact.

He is a powerful enemy to have made. But he is not the first judge to have spoken out against Mr Howard's tough criminal justice policy. In 1993, Lord Woolf described his last law-and-order initiative as short sighted and irresponsible. "The easy option which has a miserable record of failure is to send more and more people to prison regardless of the consequences, including the shocking

waste of resources which could be spent elsewhere." Seven other judges came out in support.

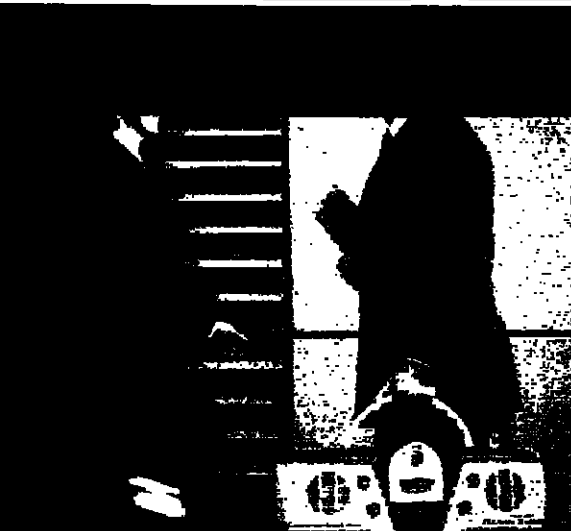
Mr Howard was stung, but clearly not deterred from incurring judicial wrath when Lord Taylor made clear his views at an informal meeting last week. While such chats between judges and ministers have taken place for many years, it is only since Lord Taylor took office in 1992 that judges have so damagingly and publicly voiced their views outside court.

Lord Lane, his predecessor, was known to have had violent disagreements with previous

Home Secretaries, but remained silent.

The judges' desire to speak out has coincided with their changing role as law makers in Britain's unwritten constitution. The "new" judiciary are increasingly called upon, and unafraid, to protect the citizen against the state. Judicial review of government decisions has been a big growth area in the law. And Michael Howard has been forced to amend legislation and change government policy more than any other minister.

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent



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Forget Shakespeare and Pam Ayres, Kipling's poem is chosen as the nation's favourite

If
If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the 'unforgiving minute'
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And – which is more – you'll be a Man, my son!

Rudyard Kipling

British voters keep their heads and say 'If' is the best of all

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Arts Reporter

A poll to find the nation's favourite poem – an event which could have provided Britain's most embarrassing publicity since the survey which found that Rolf Harris was the public's best-known artist – ended respectably, if not with a bang, last night.

After six days of voting the people's choice, with more than double the votes of its nearest rival, turned out to be Rudyard Kipling's *If* – admittedly redolent of the former O-Level syllabus, but the work of a Nobel laureate none the less.

The rest of the Top 10, however, turned up some surprises. They were Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott*; Walter de la Mare's *The Listener*; Stevie Smith's *Not Waving But Drowning*; Wordsworth's *Daffodils* ("He wandered lonely as a cloud"); Keats's *To Autumn* and his *Ode to a Nightingale*; WB Yeats's *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* and *He Wishes For The Cloths Of Heaven*.

en and Wilfred Owen's war poem, *Dulce Et Decorum Est*.

The poll to find the nation's favourite poem began on Saturday and finished at noon yesterday, National Poetry Day. Nominations – of any poem in the world – were made by 7,500 calls to a premium-rate telephone number by members of the public. Votes were cast for more than 200 authors and almost 1,000 poems, with *Cargoes*, John Masefield's rhythmic *tour de force*, and Lewis Carroll's *limerick* both losing an early lead.

The choice of *If* comes as something of a relief to staff of BBC's *The Bookworm*, who organised the poll and arranged for the acclaimed Shakespearean actor, Sir Ian McKellen, to read the top choices on BBC1 at 10.30pm tonight.

There had been pessimistic speculation that the public would go for a poem rather lighter in tone, such as Pam Ayres's *Oh, I Wish I'd Looked After My Teeth*, a ditty on the corrosive effect of toothpaste.

The Top Ten

- 1) *If*, Rudyard Kipling
- 2) *The Lady of Shalott*, Alfred, Lord Tennyson
- 3) *The Listener*, Walter de la Mare
- 4) *Not Waving but Drowning*, Stevie Smith
- 5) *Daffodils*, William Wordsworth
- 6) *To Autumn*, John Keats
- 7) *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*, WB Yeats
- 8) *Dulce et Decorum Est*, Wilfred Owen
- 9) *Ode to a Nightingale*, John Keats
- 10) *He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven*, WB Yeats

But although it won a following, it was more than balanced by the votes for poems by Byron, Keats, Robert Frost, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Wil-

fred Owen, John Donne and Thomas Gray.

The favourite modern poets to emerge from the survey were Carol Ann Duffy and Simon Armitage, while the children's vote was overwhelmingly in favour of Quentin Blake and Alan Ahlberg.

The only great British poet who failed to win a respectable share was, oddly enough, William Shakespeare, even though the bookmakers Ladbrokes had laid odds of two to one that Sonnet 18 ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day") would win.

In fact, none of the poems chosen by the bookies as top favourites – William Blake's *The Tiger*, John Donne's *Holy Sonnet*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnet From The Portuguese* ("How do I love thee? Let me count the ways") and WH Auden's *Funeral Blues*, famously quoted in the film *Four Weddings And A Funeral* – came close.

Some poems nominated completely baffled Daisy Good-

win, *The Bookworm*'s executive producer, and poetry experts.

Last night, they were trying to identify Anne Marie Cusack's *Paradise* (15 votes) and Hazel Shrumplin's *My Memories*.

Other problems stemmed from the difficulties experienced by the staff drafted in to decipher the names of the poets and poems from the answerphone messages left by callers. They recorded numerous votes for a weird character called Lord Bryon, while other suspicious nominations included *Allergy In A Country Churchyard*, *Golchy et Gwackorum Est*, *The Rubarb of O' Mark I Am*, *AA Milne's Vespas* and *Not Wading But Drowning*.

Ms Goodwin said she was delighted with the results. "The range of votes is incredible. Apart from Hazel Shrumplin and Anne Marie Cusack, pretty much every well-known poet got votes. It shows that the great British public is a lot more discerning about poetry than any one would give them credit for," she said.

National Poetry Day: for better or verse?

William Seighart successfully broke down the barriers to make poetry fun

One of the oddest things about trying to start a National Poetry Day some 18 months ago was that most of the people I spoke to thought that there already was one. And, coupled with that, came the excitement that almost everyone was willing to help.

What began as an idea in the 19th century, became a bandwagon that swept through Britain and Ireland, supported by what can only be described as a group of "poetry commandos" sandbagging broadcasters, publishers and publicists to back this fanciful theme. Any doubts as to the potential pitfalls were set aside as venues were booked, poems and posters printed and powerful organisations like the BBC and the Arts Council offered enthusiastic support.

Why do it? Because it's fun. We set out to break down the barriers and embarrassment associated with reading poetry

aloud. If you can break through our traditional Anglo-Saxon reticence and allow more of the Celtic into our lives we would all admit to liking a little poetry from somewhere. Poetry is magnificent companion in this busy modern world, often giving us a vocabulary for emotions we cannot express.

The public response to National Poetry Day shows that we have succeeded in our aim – poetry is alive, well and kicking. It was and is a call to arms for everyone who loves poetry to join in the fun. I hope the work of the Forward Poetry Trust, with organisations like The Poetry Society, help to dispel any remaining prejudice people have about the role of poetry in their lives. Here's to next year.

William Seighart is Director of Forward Publishing and Chairman of the Forward Poetry Trust which administers National Poetry Day.



William Seighart above, and Ken Smith, below



But poet Ken Smith rues the fact that poetry's share of the market is shrinking

National Poetry Day is here again, the second of its ilk. And yes, I have to say that anything that promotes poetry has to be useful.

And apt. In the last two decades writing poetry became one of the few growth industries in this ailing isle. As the queues lengthened it seemed more and more people turned to writing. Groups and centres and courses sprang up – contemporary poetry and creative writing entered the national curriculum, poets entered schools and pubs and prisons. For the young and upcoming there are more and more glittering prizes, and in recent years young poets have been going off like bombs. They now talk about their "careers".

Even so, a recent Arts Council inquiry into who knows what in poetry was a triumph for the familiar and the banal. And anyway, what's it all for, when the market share is shrinking?

The collapse of the Net Book Agreement means less poetry will get published, with fewer bookshops in which to find it. Recent major casualties in the poetry publishing trade represent decisions made not by poetry lovers or promoters but by accountants. Result: more poets chasing fewer publishers. Less volumes, slim or otherwise.

Anyway, and here's the rub: last year on this day there was a lot of poetic activity by poets. This year, it seems to be readings of favourite poems by celebrities, the safe familiar verse declaimed by the safe and familiar faces.

And what will I be doing on National Poetry Day? Bugger All. Bah humbug.

Ken Smith's publications include *The Poet Reclining*, *Terra*, *Wormwood*, *The Heart of the Border*, *Tender to the Queen of Spain*, *Inside Time*, *Berlin Coming in from the Cold*.



The nation's choice: Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), whose classic poem 'If', was a favourite of Marie Curie, his contemporary and a fellow Nobel prize-winner

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news

The Rosemary West trial: Woman accused of 10 murders had 'open marriage', say Cromwell Street boarders

Lodgers tell of couple driven by sex

WILL BENNETT

Sex dominated the household at 25 Cromwell Street, with Rosemary and Frederick West admitting that they had an open marriage and both of them sleeping with lodgers. Winchester Crown Court was told yesterday.

Shirley Robinson, a lodger whose remains were later found with those of a fetus at the house in Gloucester, became pregnant by Mr West while Mrs West had sex with two men on the first night they moved into a bed sitting room there.

"They used to embarrass me quite a lot by talking about their open marriage or sex," said Elizabeth Brewer, who moved into Cromwell Street as a lodger in 1977.

The court also heard that Lynda Gough, whose remains were found in the cellar, was a regular visitor to the house where she had affairs with several lodgers and that Juanita Mott, another victim, rented a room there.

Mrs West, 41, denies murdering 10 girls and young women whose remains were found at Cromwell Street and at the Wests' previous home in Gloucester.

Mr West, who was charged with 12 murders, was found dead in his prison cell on 1 January this year.

Mrs Brewer told the court yesterday that she moved into a £7 a week bedroom at 25 Cromwell Street when she was 17 and discovered that Mrs

West had what she called her "special room" which was always kept locked.

She said: "I would constantly be informed about their open marriage and that Rose had her girlfriends and Fred had his girlfriends. They were quite happy to have an open marriage."

"There would be times when they mentioned that they knew about people's personal sex lives and Mrs West said that when she retired she was going to spend her whole retirement engaged in sexual activity."

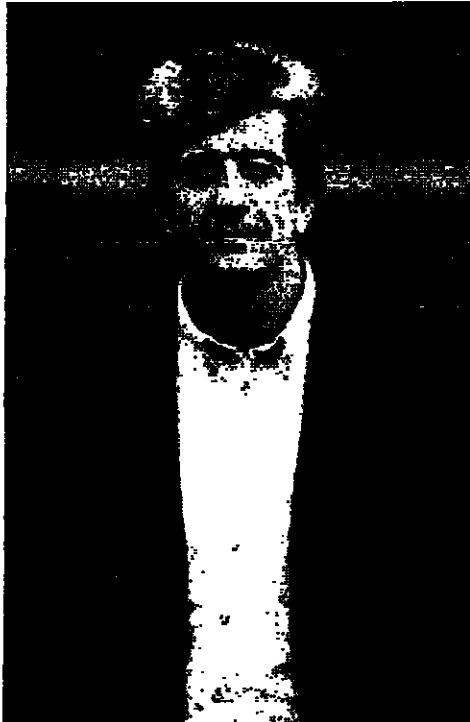
Mrs Brewer said that both Shirley Robinson, 16, and Mrs West were pregnant at the time and that one day she saw Shirley and Mr West kissing and cuddling outside the girl's room.

She became friendly with Shirley who asked her if she could stay in Mrs Brewer's room. She told the court: "She needed to keep away from Mr and Mrs West. She spent all the time in my room."

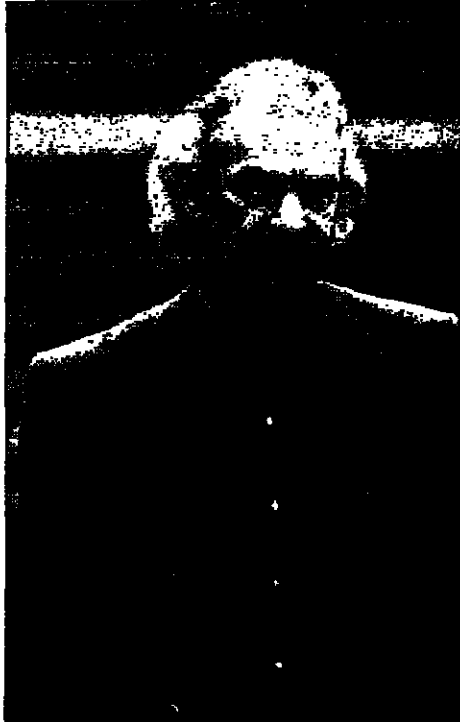
She said that "there was a breakdown in communication" between Shirley and the couple and that Mr West told her that Shirley was becoming too possessive towards him. Shirley vanished in May 1978.

Linda Greening, a neighbour who lived directly opposite 25 Cromwell Street told the court that she was pregnant at the same time as Mrs West and Shirley and was invited over for a cup of tea.

She said that she was "shocked" when Mrs West told her that Mr West was the father of Shirley's unborn child. She



Ben Stanniland (left) and David Evans, lodgers at the Cromwell Street home of Rose (top) and Fred West



added that Mrs West did not seem upset by this.

Earlier, Benjamin Stanniland, another former lodger at the house, recalled how Mrs West got into bed with him and a friend called Alan Davies on their first night at the house. This was the only time that they had sex with her.

Mr Stanniland said that he met Lynda Gough in Gloucester and brought her back to Cromwell Street where she be-

came a regular visitor over the next six to seven months.

He said that he also remembered Caroline Owens, who was the victim of a sex attack by the Wests for which they were subsequently fined. Brian Leveson QC, prosecuting, asked: "Did you see her after she had stopped living at the house?"

Mr Stanniland replied: "Only on one occasion. I went downstairs to bang on Mrs West's door to borrow the Hoover to do

some cleaning up and on opening the door she was there."

Under cross examination by Richard Ferguson QC, defending Mrs West, he said that Mrs Owens was not crying and that he did not notice any bruising on her face.

He said that during the period of about 14 months that he spent at Cromwell Street in 1972-3, the Gloucestershire police raided tenants at the house looking for drugs.



men and four women that he had also had a sexual relationship with Lynda Gough for a time but she suddenly stopped visiting the house.

Mr Evans said: "Rose came up one morning and said that Lynda Gough had hit her daughter while babysitting and that she would not be coming back to the house again."

The last time he saw Lynda was when she had an argument with Alan Davies, another lodger, and it was after that that Mrs West told him that she had been sacked as the babysitter.

The jury was also read records from Gloucester Royal Hospital yesterday. The first showed that Mr West was admitted to the casualty unit at 25 minutes past midnight on January 3, 1974, with a severe laceration to his right hand.

This was a week after Lucy Partington, whose remains were found in the Cromwell Street cellar, disappeared in Cheltenham. A knife was found with her bones in the grave.

The second showed that Mrs West was admitted to the hospital on 13 August 1974 with a cut to her right hand.

When she arrived at the casualty department she gave the reason for the wound as "playing around with knives".

The jury will visit 25 Cromwell Street next Thursday. Mr Justice Mantell, the judge, said he had reservations about the trip but granted their request to look round the house and garden.

The case continues today.

IN BRIEF

Toxic gas blamed for miner's death

The Mines Inspectorate last night launched an inquiry into the death of a miner thought to have been asphyxiated after an inrush of gas 650 metres below ground at Thoresby colliery, a Nottinghamshire.

Andrew Fielding, 39, a 1-ther-of-two, is the first fatality at a pit run by RJB Mining, which last year bought the bit of British Coal. Two other miners and four rescue workers were treated for breathing problems. The National Union of Mineworkers said miners in the pit had been complaining for weeks about oil fumes.

Boy in murder case

A 13-year-old boy is to appear in court today accused of the murder of a vagrant found burning in a park at Eastleigh, Hampshire, last month. Ala Whittle, 50, died from his injuries last week.

Mail jobs threat

The Royal Mail dismissed claims by the Communication Workers Union that a leak management report reveals plans to axe 1,200 full and temporary jobs over the next six months in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Three die in arson

A murder inquiry was launched after Diane Jones, 22, and her daughters aged two and one died in a fire at their home in Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan. Police found petrol around the front door.

Sikh wins review

Karamjit Singh Chahal, 47, a Sikh who has been held in jail for five years while he tries to fight deportation to India, was permitted to seek judicial review in the High Court of detention. The Government says he is a terrorist.

Beggar banned

Michael Walker, 41, a beggar, was banned "indefinitely" from St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden, and St John's, Standed, both in Essex, after a High Court judge granted an injunction following complaints he stole from collection boxes and abused visitors.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

Austria	£3.40	March	£1.50
Belgium	£3.80	July	£1.40
Canada	£4.20	March	£1.50
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Young blames BR for 56% fares hike

CHRISTIAN WOLMAR
Transport Correspondent

Sir George Young, the Secretary of State for Transport, stirred up a political row by blaming British Rail for the 56 per cent fare increase imposed on a group of commuters in the West Country.

In a statement issued yesterday, Sir George also said that it was the type of problem which privatisation was designed to solve, but his remarks were immediately dismissed as "indefensible" by Labour.

The increase was imposed by the Regional Railways South Wales and West train company for early-morning travellers between Exmouth and Paignton and came to light following a complaint by the father of 13-year-old schoolboy Steven Silverman.

John Silverman found that the seven-week season ticket for his son to travel the seven miles to Torre station, Torquay, to go to school had risen from £38.25 to £59.60.

A letter from South Wales and West to Mr Silverman said that the price changes were made because of an "extreme demand situation". Apparently 250 people, mainly local students, have been trying to cram onto the 150-seater 7.20am train and the return 4.12pm was also very overcrowded.

The rail company says it does not have the additional rolling stock to increase the length of the train.

Sean O'Neill, the secretary of the local passenger watchdog, RUCC, said that his organisation had not been alerted about the rise by the train operator. "There is supposed to be a statutory duty for them to inform us but the system has not worked since the reorganisation of the railways in 1994," he said.

Eryl Jones, spokesman for South Wales and West said that the increase on the Exmouth to Paignton line was unique: "Overall, our fares went up in May by just under the national inflation rate. And several fares have gone down."



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TORIES IN BLACKPOOL

Clarke targets Middle England

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

The Chancellor yesterday warned the conference that cuts in public expenditure to pay for tax cuts could mean changes in policy.

Urging his party to support the spending cuts, which will be announced with the Budget in November, Kenneth Clarke said "controlling spending requires policy change as well".

He also reaffirmed the Government's priority to low inflation at the heart of its economic strategy. Mr Clarke sought to offer the hard-pressed Tory voters in "Middle England" the prospect of rewards in the Budget.

But he was given a lukewarm applause at the end of a debate on the economy that exposed some of the widespread unrest in the party over the past increases in taxes and the plight of home buyers.

He was given a dutiful standing ovation, with Baroness Thatcher and the Prime Minister symbolically side-by-side on the platform for the first time, but it registered one of the lowest readings of the week on the Independent's clappometer.

Facing calls from the hall for tax allowances for housewives, and the restoration of mortgage tax relief for home owners, Mr Clarke said many felt "the time has come for some reward in the next Budget".

Using the words of Francis Urquhart in *The House of Cards* to confirm their hopes would be fulfilled, Mr Clarke went on: "You may think that - but I couldn't possibly comment."

The Chancellor made it clear he would direct his Budget at



Laughing matter: The Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, in jocular mood at Blackpool yesterday

Photograph: Brian Harris

"Middle England" and his speech targeted the demands for help in nearly 200 motions for the economic debate.

"It will be a Budget based on traditional values. It will be a Budget that I am looking for-

ward to a lot more than the last two," said Mr Clarke, who raised £3.9bn in taxes in 1994.

"It will be a Budget that addresses Middle England, and Middle Wales and Middle Scotland and Middle Ulster.

"The people who are hard-working and self-reliant. Our people who want to get on. Our people who take responsibility for themselves and for their families. Our people who want to give their children a better

start than they had themselves." Mr Clarke added: "Cutting the tax we want to cut can't be done all in one go. It must not be done thoughtlessly and it must be the start of a process continuing into the future.

"We will only cut taxes when it is in the interests of the British economy to do so. The British people are a responsible people who would not want it any other way. So when we cut taxes, it will be for keeps. Mr Blair is terrified that we might be able to cut taxes."

The Labour leader was "just the smile on the face of the Labour movement", he said. Real Labour, behind its grinning leader, was "gritting its teeth and baring its fangs after the next election".

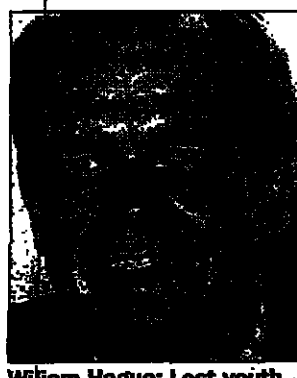
Mr Clarke urged supporters to write to him with evidence of Labour spending pledges, and made it clear the Tories will seek to repeat the 1992 election campaign against Labour's alleged "tax bombshell".

In the debate, Edward Russell (South Shields) said the cut 10 per cent cut in Miras had caused "a great slump in our popularity".

A three-year rolling programme of tax cuts, starting in the next Budget, was demanded by Robert Guy (Richmond). Pauline Blow (West Midlands) said married one-earner families were at a disadvantage compared to two-earner parents and single parents. "Transferable tax allowances would help," she said. "We are asking you to give one-earner couples the tax advantages that dual-earner couples have."

John Godfrey, a former ministerial adviser, was heckled when he urged the Chancellor to adopt Gordon Brown's plan for a windfall profits tax on the privatised utilities. "Shame," shouted one representative, showing Mr Clarke he will have no easy choices.

Hague attempts to bridge the age divide



William Hague: Lost youth

JOHN RENTOUL
Political Correspondent

The youngest Cabinet minister, William Hague, 34, yesterday made an attempt to appeal to young people in a special conference session which paraded a series of young speakers proclaiming Tory values.

The balding Mr Hague, Secretary of State for Wales, recalled his first speech to the Tory conference at the even younger age of 16 in 1978, when he first

impressed Margaret Thatcher, as he led a drive to counter Tory Blair's "young country" theme.

Party strategists are acutely aware that the average age of Tory party members is 62, and that the representatives in Blackpool are markedly older than the delegates to last week's Labour conference in Brighton.

But Mr Hague claimed young people today are in tune with Tory policies and beliefs. He said: "For the first time since the 1930s we are seeing a young generation which is not the

natural ally of the political left." He went on: "When I went to university, I used to debate with wild-eyed Marxist idealists who filled debating chambers with calls for unilateral disarmament and nationalisation." Now young people believed in "choice, freedom, independence".

But he admitted: "No one younger than me can fully remember a Labour government in all its grubby and miserable detail. And it's true that that is our problem."

Called "Spotlight on the Young", the session was launched with a video featuring Sebastian Coe's 1984 gold medal for the 1500m in the Los Angeles Olympics. It was introduced by Mr Coe, 39, now the Tory MP for Falmouth: "I believe there is a gold medal in all of us," he told the conference. "Young people are not, as the Labour Party tried to tell us last week, sitting jolly-like waiting for state handouts".

Mr Coe introduced some models of Conservative youth,

who addressed the conference, and interviewed some more in the front row, in a parody of the live television coverage. Clare Stowe, 23, a teacher from Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, linked Mr Coe's athletic achievements to Tory philosophy: "Children need to understand competitive games as life is competitive."

But one young Tory who did not speak was Justin Hinchcliffe, 14, the right-wing representative who provoked a row last week when it seemed he might be excluded from the conference.

Yesterday at the conference

Main announcements

- Early or automatic early release for prisoners
- Automatic life sentence on second offence for violent and sexual criminals
- Stiff minimum sentence for burglars and drug dealers on third offence
- Crime Bill before election
- New crime prevention quango
- Network of masters across Whitehall to promote small businesses
- Prospect of rolling programme of tax cuts

Quotes of the day

"I have no animus against Germany, but I don't want to be ruled by them and I don't want to be ruled by them either." *Bill Cash on the consequences of a federal Europe*

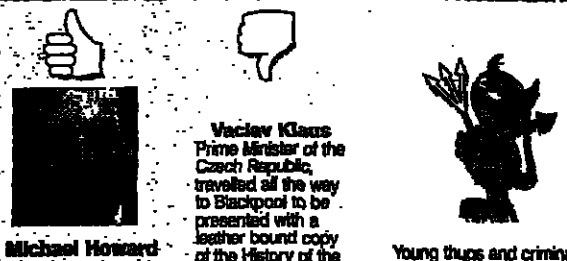
"I've got some advice on how to establish a small business - buy a big one, vote Labour." *Andrew Bell, Homsey and Wood Green*

"Britain can't afford a Labour government just to prove that Britain can't afford a Labour government." *Peter Lilley*

"You know and I know that for Britain any Labour would be hard labour." *Michael Howard*

"Some of you think I talk about Prudence so much that my wife should start getting worried." *Kenneth Clarke*

Good day... bad day Devil of the day



Michael Howard having the easiest ride of a Home Secretary for many a year by staying in the Tory conference hall for punishment

Vladimir Klaus Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, revealed all the way to Blackpool to be presented with a leather bound copy of the History of the Conservative Party

Young thugs and criminals

The big three on the fringe

- 1 Lord Tebbit and Peter Lilley, Conservative Way Forward, 200 people
- 2 Sir Leon Brittan, Euro-commissioner, on the Future of Europe, Conservative Group for Europe, 60 people
- 3 Bill Cash, warring against "A German Europe", *Monday Club*

The party to be seen at

- Lord Archer, night two, more champagne
- Lord Hesketh, night three, yet more champagne
- Conference Ball, Winter Gardens
- Tory Campaign for Homosexual Equality reception

Sightings

John Major with entourage enjoying a fish and chip supper at The Cottage on the outskirts of Blackpool

Rapturemeter

	Michael Howard	Kenneth Clarke	Baroness Thatcher
4 min	2 min	1 min	
3 sec	6 sec	32 sec	
97 decibels	905 decibels	100 decibels	

Michael Dobbs: man of the moment

Lord Tebbit who spoke volumes for party unity without uttering a word by shaking John Major's hand on the platform

Today's speeches

Today John Major makes his address and the faithful will stand and applaud dutifully before leaving for home

Compiled by Stephen Goodwin

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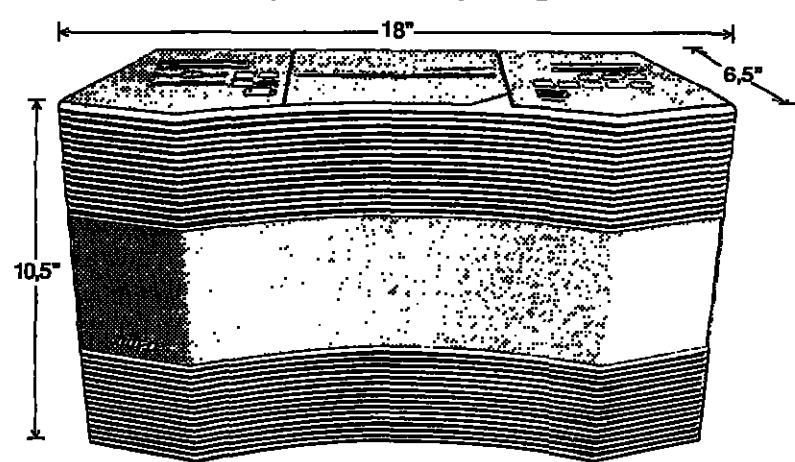
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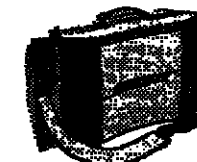
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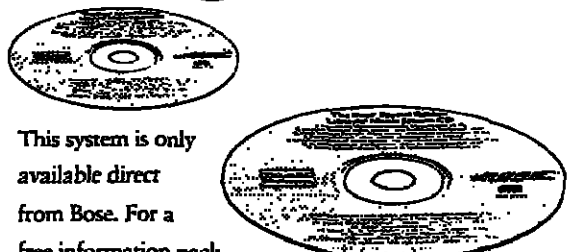


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news

Clarke carries a 'tattered' flag

Ken Clarke still carries the tattered flag of decency in the Tory party. But the pincers are closing on him.

On the day he faced a conference frantic for personal tax cuts, the inflation figure for the year to September was announced as 3.9 per cent - and that is the figure that determines the uprating of benefits and pensions.

Yesterday we saw a Chancellor having to deal with a party which has been gripped by pre-electoral panic since the halfway mark of this parliament. It would have taken incredible political nerve for the Chancellor not to offer tax cuts in the forthcoming budget. The 1922 Committee would tear him limb from limb. Yet there is no economic case at present for cuts in personal taxation, nor is it likely that they will buy the Tory party a political reprieve.

Clarke conceded yesterday that the tax cutters have won. We do not customarily think of Clarke as a coquettish politician, but he teased the conference with: "The time has come for some reward in the next budget." That has taken him beyond the point of no return.

Even as the Chancellor enlarged on what he meant by a budget that would be based on "traditional Tory values", he sought - poignantly, for me - to retrieve the irretrievable. It would be a budget for "our people who want to send their children to good state schools and be cared for by the NHS... our people who have a social conscience and want a society



ALAN HOWARTH

that can earn the wealth to give others less fortunate a helping hand." It will be interesting to see how, in November, he reconciles the two propositions - near-term tax cuts and desperately needed increases in resources for key public services.

In the rest of his speech the Chancellor, in conformity with conference ritual, bashed Labour and bashed Blair. It was half-hearted stuff and evoked a half-hearted response.

We can hardly expect a party conference to be a seminar, yet it would be courteous to citizens watching on television, and possibly a better way to win favour, if Conservative ministers would treat us to some serious discussion. Ken Clarke simply asserted that a minimum wage and the social chapter would be damaging, but didn't begin to say why. Michael Howard said, at length, that criminals would spend longer in prison, and insisted again that "prison works". But he made no attempt to deal with the arguments against this. Labour's debates in Brighton were in a different league of constructive seriousness.

Alan Howarth defected from the Conservatives to the Labour Party last week.

TORIES IN BLACK

Europe debate: Euro-sceptics back Defence Secretary as fall-out over speech worsens



Centre of attention: The Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, at a Conservative Way Forward group dinner with Lord Pindson (left)

Photograph: Brian Harris

Major drawn into Portillo row

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

The row intensified yesterday over Michael Portillo's tirade against Brussels as sources close to the Secretary of State for Defence confirmed that the Prime Minister had seen a text of the speech before it was delivered to the Conservative Party conference in Blackpool.

Some senior party officials sought to distance John Major from the damage caused by Mr

Portillo's speech by suggesting that he had approved the policy without seeing the text. But asked whether Mr Major had seen the text, a Portillo source said: "Of course."

That confirmation will embarrass the Prime Minister, and is certain to lead to questions in the Commons next week over whether he approves of the line adopted by Mr Portillo. Some Cabinet colleagues are uncomfortable with the anti-Brussels tone set by Mr Portillo

and are looking to Mr Major to seek to repair some of the damage in his speech today to the conference.

A senior official from the European Commission sent a fax to the BBC accusing Mr Portillo of "Brussels bashing" and questioning whether the Tories could lose the election over the anti-European tone adopted by Mr Portillo.

Peter Guilford, a senior spokesman for the commission, sent the fax to the BBC to

put a question in a phone-in to Michael Heseltine, the deputy Prime Minister. Some senior Tories last night reacted with anger that a civil servant from Brussels should have intervened in British politics.

Mr Guilford's question was: How can Michael Heseltine reassure those Britons on this side of the Channel who are increasingly convinced that ministerial Brussels-bashing will erode Britain's influence in the European Union at a time

when it needs it most, and may even help lose the Conservatives the next election?

Mr Heseltine replied: "What Michael Portillo was talking about was the concept of a federalist state or the surrender of interests over British military discretion to authorities other than that of the British government. He was making it clear in language that drew attention to his views that we would not be in support of that."

Mr Portillo refused to comment on Mr Guilford's intervention, but Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, who is more pro-European, made clear his disagreement. "The fact that we are deriving enormous benefits from our place in Europe, the fact that our economies in the modern world are getting ever more integrated and interdependent, the fact that Britain must be a mover and shaker in determining how that market is run is vitally important," he said.

Party faithful resolve to calm stormy waters

STEPHEN GOODWIN
and JOHN RENTOUL

Arriving on the conference platform to thunderous applause yesterday, Margaret Thatcher could take satisfaction on two counts: she still enjoys the affections of the party faithful, and they are clamouring with increased confidence for a return to her brand of hard-edged Conservatism.

But to the relief of party managers there has been little of the bitter in-fighting that has characterised the last two Tory conferences. Differences are being suppressed in the long run-up to the election.

Europe remains the most divisive issue with the sceptics arguing against integration at numerous fringe meetings. However, one seasoned observer, Michael Dobbs, a former deputy chairman, said yesterday: "We are now talking about nuances rather than open warfare."

John Redwood summed up the Right's demands as budget

tax cuts for homeowners and families, more choice in public services, and a declaration not to join a single currency. Mr Redwood said the party had heard "encouraging words" from ministers on lower taxes, better services and standing up for Britain's interests abroad. "We now need action."

The Thatcherite ex-Secretary of State for Wales has proposed a £5bn cut in public spending. Contrasting this to Government plans for a 3 per cent increase next year, he asked: "How many companies and families will enjoy that? Surely any large organisation could get by with a little less."

Edward Leigh, a former minister sacked by Mr Major, told a meeting organised by the Freedom Association that the party should stop "wallowing in self-doubt" and return to policies that took power out of the hands of the state.

Confirmation for the sceptics that they have won the argument on Europe came with the

return to the platform of Lord Tebbit and a handshake from the Prime Minister. Two years ago, the former party chairman shook the conference with a fierce anti-European Union speech from the floor.

"Don't rock the boat when it is turning to a more sensible course," Lord Tebbit told a meeting of the Conservative Way Forward group. Peter Lilley, Secretary of State for Social Security, reaffirmed his own Euro-scepticism from the shared platform but resisted demands for a more right-wing policy on welfare.

From the left of the party, Stephen Dorrell, Secretary of State for Health, delivered a coded rebuke to the radical right. "Revolutionary change disorients people. They become frightened by the unfamiliarity of the landscape and become easy prey for the peddlers of fraudulent certainties." Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor, added: "Slightly undue attention is paid to the noisier elements."

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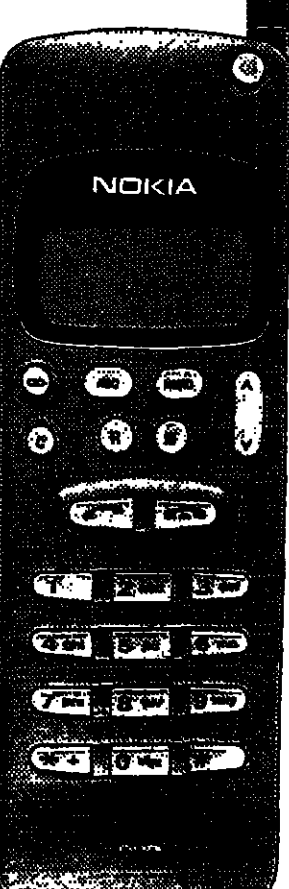
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TORIES IN BLACKPOOL

'Irritated' Major may lose out on Nobel prize

COLIN BROWN
Chief Political Correspondent

The Prime Minister was irritated last night by rumours sweeping the Tory party conference that he may be excluded from the Nobel Peace Prize to be awarded today for bringing peace to Northern Ireland.

Rumours in Washington and Dublin suggested the Nobel panel may have decided to give the award to Albert Reynolds, the former Irish Prime Minister, and John Hume, the leader of the SDLP, excluding John Major and Gerry Adams, the Sinn Féin president.

Mr Major is among the nominations with Mr Reynolds and the announcement, due at 11am today, threatens to overshadow the Prime Minister's keynote speech to the conference, which he will be making at the same time.

Aides said last night that he had not been told who had won the \$1m prize but "he is irritated". If he wins the award it could be a remarkable feather in his cap, which could produce a substantial political bonus for the Prime Minister.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Patrick Mayhew, will seek to push the peace process forward next week in talks with Dick Spring, the Irish Foreign Minister. There are accelerating contacts between the two governments and Sinn Féin leaders in an attempt to overcome the impasse in the peace process.

Michael Ancram, the Northern Ireland minister who is acting as a go-between for the parties, had useful talks with Martin McGuinness, the Sinn Féin leader, and is hopeful it will drop opposition to a commission to oversee the decommissioning of IRA weapons.

Sinn Féin is being brought under strong pressure from Washington to agree to the international commission, which will be headed by a respected

US figure. London and Dublin support the idea, and British ministers believe it remains the key to making further progress towards inclusive all-party talks.

Officials denied a report that there was early prospect of Gerry Adams sitting down with David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, unless there is progress on decommissioning. But Irish sources noted a softening by Sir Patrick on three conditions, including decommissioning IRA arms, set out in Washington for Sinn Féin to take part in all-party talks.

Sir Patrick yesterday told the Tory party conference he was seeking the three conditions, but that was seen as a shift from earlier demands. He outlined the twin-track formula, for the commission and a fresh round of preliminary talks involving all the parties, which was to have been announced at the summit between Mr Major and John Bruton, the Irish premier.

The summit had to be called off by the Irish when Sinn Féin rejected the commission. Sir Patrick made it clear the commission proposal was not dead and a fresh summit could be arranged next month, before President Clinton visits London and Dublin.

If the commission can be accepted, Sinn Féin will quickly move to the bilateral or trilateral talks with the two governments, and, probably, the SDLP.

Sir Patrick said Sinn Féin could only join the all-party talks with the Ulster Unionists after progress on decommissioning. "We have proposed preliminary talks, with all parties able to contribute, to prepare the ground for the later all-party political negotiations."

"But we will not call for such all-party negotiations on the political future of Northern Ireland when we know that, for lack of the necessary confidence, those parties representing most of the people of Northern Ireland will not come," he said.

Young and old not given quite enough rope

The party with an average age of 62 (and that is just the Young Conservatives) decided yesterday morning to prove, despite all appearances to the contrary, that it had young blood coursing through its veins. It did this by inviting a 39-year-old retired athlete and a 34-year-old slap-head to launch its focus on youth. No wonder Seb Coe and William Hague looked embarrassed: just about to face up to mid-life crisis, here were the pair of them expected to act as MCs at the Tory rave.

Coe, the runner who defied Mrs Thatcher to gain his first gold medal at Moscow, said he was going to introduce us to some young Tories whose achievements, he claimed, in their own way were equal to his. Taking a microphone, he patrolled the conference hall picking out youngsters.

"And what do you do?" he asked them, like a royal on walkabout. "I'm training to be a solicitor," said one. "Well done," he replied. At the risk of sounding unduly cynical, I'm not sure if, as an achievement, going to law school to learn the intricacies of chargeable time opportunities quite matches breaking the world 800 metres record.

The conference clearly agreed. It wasn't youth that got it back on to full throaty, stamping adolescent form. It was the return of old times, old values, old Lady Thatcher. Her Ladyship arrived on stage for the economics debate, her appearance provoking, in parts of the hall, an ovation which shot past the orgasmic. Other parts, however, mainly those housing Leon Brittan, could barely bring themselves to clap.

It was a shrewd move by Kenneth Clarke to invite Lady Thatcher to share his platform. Potentially the least popular speaker of the week, he basked in her reflected glory and shone. Mainly from the upper lip, as it happens: the lights unforgivingly catching the sweat building on his face. The portly Mr Clarke sweated because his deficit grows ever bigger, his stomach breaking the restraints of his double-breasted suit to rest, comfortably, on the lectern. "In the last year we have grown



JIM WHITE

faster than any other country he Europe," he yelled in triumph at one point. And that was just around the chin.

More old friends appeared in the afternoon: law, order and Norman Tebbit.

The annual Home Affairs debate is the time that Tory mouths traditionally produce enough foam to keep one of Jack Straw's squeegee merchants' bucket full for a month. But this year, it seemed a more muted affair: it took 45 minutes before the first delegate demanded the return of capital punishment.

Michael Howard - the man who should long ago have been committed for crimes against the letter "L" - started slowly too. His first speech as Home Secretary had included 27 new proposals, but here, for the kind of red-toothed Tory who believes judges are dangerous liberals, there were worrying moments of spineless indecision: waffle about stopping racial attacks, fashionable nonsense about identifying children at risk and helping them. "I today announce," he finally said, to a hall-wide intake of breath, "the creation of the Crime Prevention Agency". There they were hoping for the rope, and got a quango.

Fortunately for the length of his ovation, Howard pulled it round at the end, pushing his glasses up on to the bridge of his nose to prove he was about to get tough. A return to honesty in sentencing, he promised. "Five years should mean five years." And "those convicted for the second time of violent crime will get life." Even this announcement was not enough for one delegate, an elderly, white-haired woman who bawled "No, no, string 'em up." Those boisterous young Tories: I blame the parents.



Cue applause: Baroness Thatcher, who is 70 today and will celebrate with a champagne reception at Claridge's, taking her bow on the platform yesterday Photograph: Brian Harris

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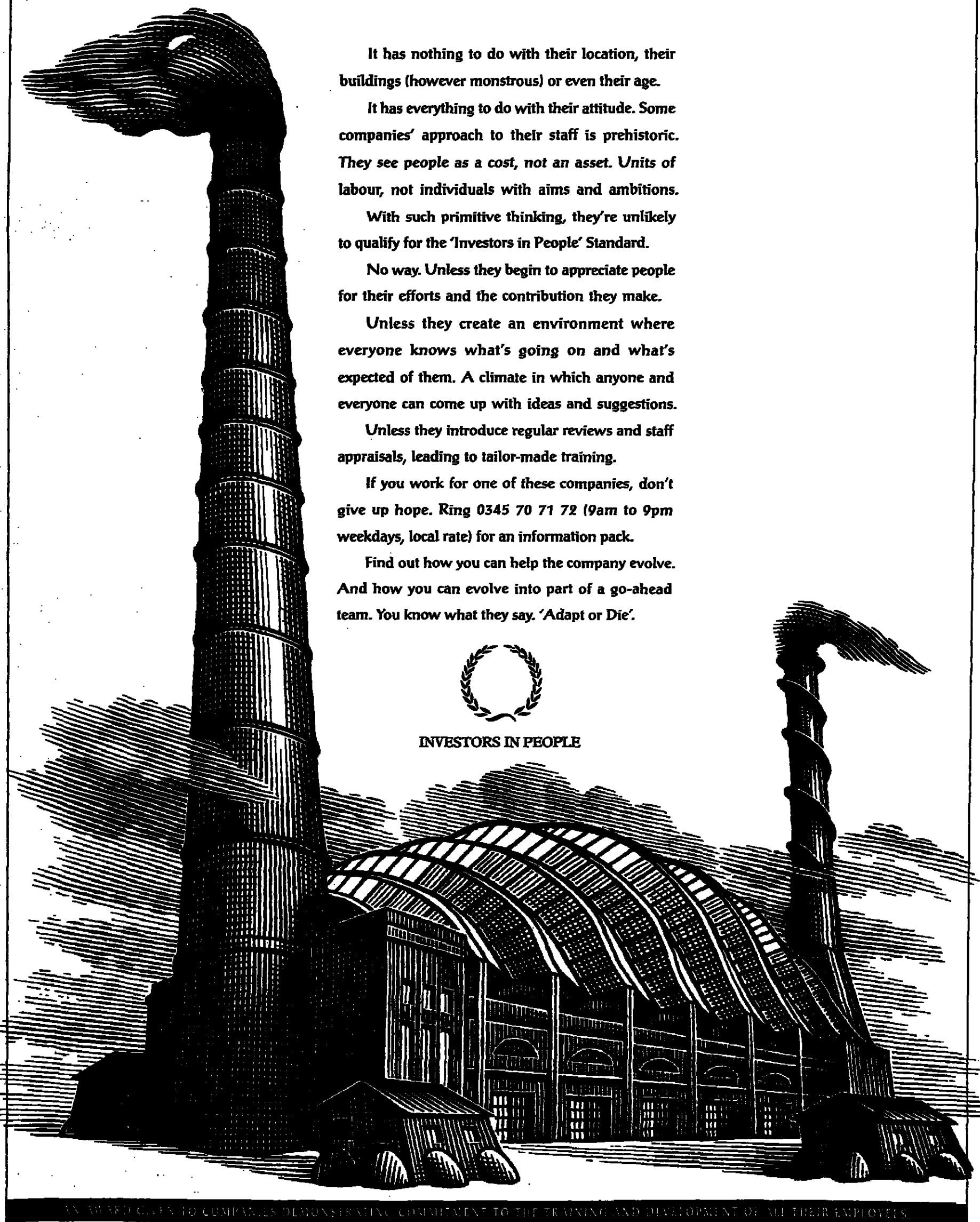
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news

Fight to televise Premier League matches looms

DAVID HELLIER and
MATTHEW HORSMAN

A battle for the rights to broadcast Premier League football is looming, as rival bidders line up to wrest control of the sport's top televised matches from the clutches of Sky television.

Although Sky, which is 40 per cent owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, remains the favourite, club owners said yesterday rival bids were inevitable.

"We're starting with a blank sheet of paper and the only thing that will determine the outcome is money," said Freddie Fletcher, chief executive of Newcastle United.

The Independent has learned that at least three groups — sports agency IMG, media company Mirror Group and Orbit, a Rome-based broadcaster owned by Middle Eastern interests — are among the potential rivals. The groups are expected to form consortia to take on Mr Murdoch.

The arrival of competing bidders to the scene is sure to push up the price football owners can extract from the winner.

Sky has the edge going into the negotiations. It is coming towards the final stages of a five-year contract — which expires at the end of next season — worth £200m, with the Premier League, and it has the right to match any other offer. Only by bidding more than Sky's deep pockets could handle would a rival win out.

"I don't think it's right to talk publicly about the details of the negotiations," Mr Fletcher said.

"What I can say is that this contract will be worth a heck of a lot more than the last one, and anybody who thinks Sky has it all sewn up just does not know the facts. I will be amazed if there's not enormous interest from broadcasters all over the world," he said.

The emergence of Rome-based Orbit appears to prove Mr Fletcher's point. Sources at the company say its eventual aim is to corner the market for pay-TV in Europe and beyond once regulations are relaxed.

Already it runs a digital multi-channel pay-TV service broadcasting news, entertainment films and sports channels to 23 countries in the Middle East and

Africa. It broadcasts Premier League and FA Cup games live to its subscribers through its sports channel. The company, which has its transmission centre outside Rome, is wholly owned by the Mawarid group from Saudi Arabia.

The Premier League is also in talks with the Eadsleigh League, which represents the three lower divisions. Its representatives met yesterday in Birmingham to discuss a proposal from the Football Association that would combine rights to the league, the FA Cup and international matches. The FA is offering £117m, raised from a planned £250m five-year deal with Sky, the BBC and ITV.

The Premier League is believed ready to make a counter offer to the Eadsleigh League, arguing that by joining forces, the two leagues could extract a higher price from broadcasters.

At this juncture, it is unclear how good a deal the Premier League will extract from Sky. The league suggests a minimum of £500m for five years and hopes for £800m. Sky scoffs at such figures, but professes none of its own publicly.

Girls on target in football revolution



Born kicking: Channelle Hutchinson and Dean Stockwell, both 11, at the launch in London of the schools' National Cup Photograph: John Voos

Record numbers of female players are fighting it out in a schools' competition

CLARE GARNER

Football's sexual revolution scored another goal yesterday with the launch of a tournament for English schools in which one in four participants will be girls.

A record 20,000 schoolchildren are expected to take part in the indoor five-a-side competition organised by the English Schools' Football Association and around 5,000 of them will be girls. No football tournament in the United Kingdom has ever attracted so many female players.

Of the 159 different schools' associations which have confirmed they will participate, 66 — including Newcastle upon Tyne, Sheffield, Liverpool, Birmingham, and Southampton — have also signed up for the girls' competition.

The National Cup, which will be sponsored by Wagon Wheels for the next three years, begins at a local level in November and culminates in a national final at Aston Villa Leisure Centre next April.

Channelle Hutchinson, 11, who plays in goal for North Westminister Community School's under-12s, yesterday joined the Arsenal and England goalkeeper, David Seaman, and the England Ladies striker,

Marianne Spacey, at Stamford Bridge, west London, to kick off the launch.

"Around 10 girls at school play football but I think this tournament will encourage more to play," said Channelle, a keen Arsenal supporter. "It's good that they have separate sections for boys and girls. I prefer to play against girls because some of the boys are sexist and think 'Oh, she must be weak, she's a girl'. Girls have more talent anyway."

Dean Stockwell, 11, from the same school as Channelle, told a different story. While he agreed that the tournament would get more girls on to the pitch he was confident that boys would always be better at the sport. "I know girls who want to play all the time. They get on my nerves," he said. "I am not worried that girls will get better than us. I know they won't."

Ms Spacey, 29, welcomed the tournament as a way of eliminating prejudices at an early age. "We have had to put up with so many chauvinists over the years who say women shouldn't be playing because it's a man's game. I think it's going to be totally acceptable for girls to take part in this tournament because it is prestigious."

Lawyer admits stealing from clients' funds

JAMES CUSICK

A former solicitor who has so far cost the Law Society compensation fund an estimated £7m after it was discovered that he illegally used clients' money, yesterday admitted 10 charges of theft when he appeared at Maidstone Crown Court in Kent.

Graham Ford's guilty pleas covered responsibility for losses not less than £5m. Ford, 52, appeared alongside a former colleague, William Bew, 36, a solicitor who worked in the probate department of the large law firm which Ford headed. Mr Bew, of Cirencester, Gloucestershire, denied four charges involving the falsification of information relating to clients' accounts handled by Ford's firm. The law practice, which closed in 1992, once operated 10 offices in London and the South-east with a staff of 152.

Ford, now a declared bankrupt, of Battle in East Sussex, was struck off by the Law Society in 1993 following an internal investigation by the Solicitors' Complaints Bureau.

The thefts occurred between 1989 and 1992. According to Tim Barnes QC, for the prosecution, Ford had "systematically stolen from clients' accounts" by using interim bills that were fictitious. Although the total amounts of the thefts itemised in the 10 charges totalled about £150,000, Ford's guilty pleas were regarded as specimens of the dishonesty he carried out between 1989 and 1992.

Mr Barnes told the court that Ford's overall responsibility was



Graham Ford: Has cost Law Society £7m compensation

accepted to be a sum of not less than £5m and that the Law Society compensation fund had paid out £7m to cover the losses incurred by his firm. Most of the thefts related to probate work carried on by the firm. The sums described in the 10 counts ranged from only a few thousand pounds to £29,000 for one account.

In September this year, the Law Society issued a writ claiming £8.5m damages from accountants KPMG over its work for Ford's firm. The writ claims KPMG, which filed annual accounting reports on the firm, was "negligent and in breach of its duty of care by failing adequately to examine the account books and other records". KPMG said it will be "contesting the writ vigorously".

Ford will be sentenced at the end of Mr Bew's trial, which continues today and is expected to last up to eight weeks.

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Public schools may start drug tests for pupils

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Police should not automatically be called when pupils are found smoking cannabis, public school heads said yesterday. They also called on schools to consider drug tests for pupils suspected of taking drugs in a report drawn up for the Head Masters' Conference of top public school heads in Dublin.

Drugs are a growing problem in both state and independent schools. This year pupils have been expelled from schools such as Eton, Millfield, Wellington and Westminster for drugs offences.

Keith Dawson, head of Haberdashers' Aske's, Hertfordshire, who led the working party which produced the report, said an isolated incident with cannabis need not necessarily involve the police. "I am not saying don't bother about cannabis, but it is a question of a pragmatic response."

Police were often busy with serious drug incidents and might take a less severe view of cannabis smoking than schools.

The report says police should be called to deal with pushers and dealers and if pupils are found taking class-A drugs such as heroin and ecstasy.

Schools are free to decide their own drugs policy and the

report treads a difficult path between heads' conflicting views on drug testing.

It poses random testing on moral and legal grounds and says: "Drug testing is not without its own problems both of principle and practice. Some day schools believe that to have drug testing in their schools would involve an unacceptable invasion of the private social activities of their pupils, which is essentially a matter for their parents."

However, it says pupils' agreement to testing could be used as an alternative to expulsion.

Richard Barker, head of Sevenoaks School, Kent, has already begun drug testing. He said a pupil was expelled in June for selling cannabis but nine others were allowed to remain on condition that they submitted to regular testing.

He said: "Drugs is a national problem. It is to the credit of independent schools that they are facing it."

Some schools expel all pupils involved in drug cases. But the report warns that this prevents heads making allowances for different degrees of guilt. "It may also encourage defeat and a closing of ranks." Expulsion, it says, should be used only as a last resort.

The working party argues that schools which expel pupils

or ask for their removal have a continuing responsibility for them and the heads should find them a new school.

It says: "We are emphatically not proposing a free market in pupils who have been expelled for misdemeanours relating to drugs. However, in cases where a head feels able to recommend a pupil in good faith, we believe that colleagues should be prepared to accept that judgment."

Mr Dawson urged schools to find out what pupils thought about drugs. He said that this hitherto had been forbidden territory with schools and parents fearing what they might uncover and pupils afraid of punishment.



Jungle fever: Sculptor David Hayes puts the finishing touches to a lifesize Indian Elephant and Bengal Tiger. The work made from fake fur and glass fibre and entitled 'The Tiger Hunt' will form a centrepiece at the Royal Armouries in Leeds, which is due to open next Easter
Photograph: Kippa Matthews

Job stress 'forces head teachers to retire early'

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

Head teachers' jobs are so stressful that fewer teachers are applying for promotion and the majority of heads are retiring early, according to a survey published yesterday.

A plan by Gillian Shephard, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, to train aspiring heads could simply deter even more potential applicants by showing them the grim realities of headship before they start, the report's author said last night.

The research showed small rural schools and those in the inner cities to be the worst affected. Many teachers have always been reluctant to work in urban areas, but problems in the countryside have escalated because of budget cuts. In these areas, heads now often face a full teaching schedule plus administrative duties.

The questionnaire of 200 schools, commissioned by the National Association of Head Teachers from John Howson, of Oxford Brookes University, also showed that for the first time a majority of new ap-

pointments were women. But more men were still recruited in secondary schools, and the chances of a woman being appointed were far less if there were a large number of applications.

Mr Howson found that applications for primary headships had dropped by 20 per cent since 1988, and for deputy headships by 30 per cent. Thirty per cent of outgoing head teachers had retired early compared with just 24 per cent who had left at retirement age. A quarter of those who had retired had done so because of ill health or stress.

Difficulties in recruiting good quality head teachers were more severe in some areas than others, Mr Howson found. In inner London, more than one-third of posts had to be re-advertised in the first seven months of 1995 compared with less than a quarter last year. In Lancashire, which has a large number of small rural schools, the percentage had risen from 17 to 26 per cent in the same period. Head teachers' salaries ranged from less than £25,000 in one small school to more than £45,000 in a large secondary.

Mr Howson said teachers were being put off applying for promotion by budget cuts and redundancies as well as by the extra administrative duties imposed through local management.

He added: "People don't like being the bearers of bad news, and if they become head they know they may have to tell staff that they can't employ another teacher or that they have to cut a secretary. Whether Mrs Shephard's scheme will encourage people to come forward or discourage them is unclear."

David Hart, general secretary of the NAHT, said qualifications would only attract the best potential heads if salary levels and administrative support in the job were also addressed.



David Hart: Salary levels for heads must be addressed

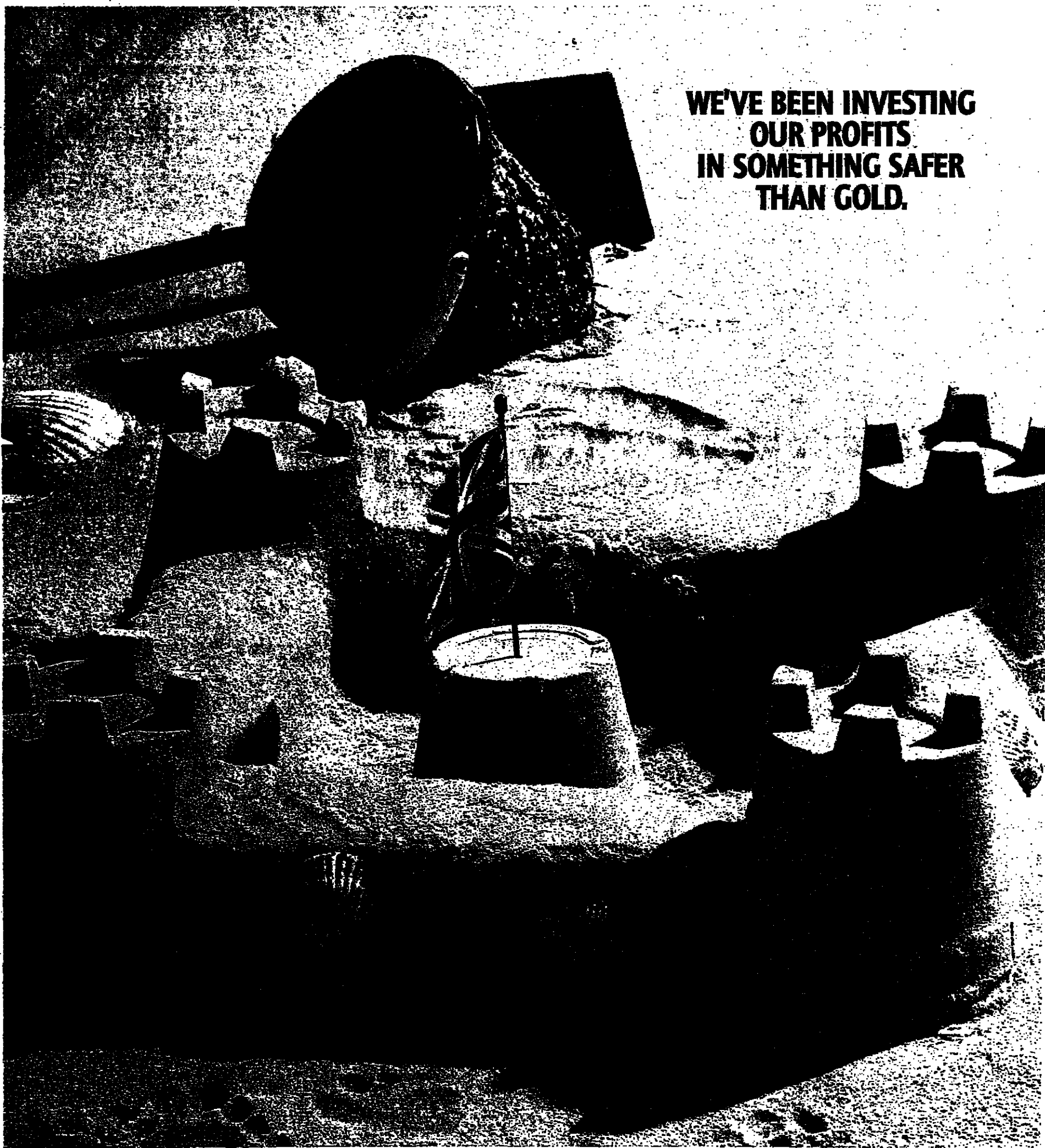
Volunteers sought for breast cancer trials

The Cancer Research Campaign yesterday launched an appeal for 20,000 women to take part in "probably the most ambitious cancer trial ever undertaken", writes Liz Hunt.

Women with breast cancer are needed for a four-year study of the drug tamoxifen, a successful drug, which is believed to be responsible for the recent fall in the death rate. Up to half a million women in the United Kingdom already take the drug, but the new trial will focus on the benefits - or otherwise - of long-term treatment. Tamoxifen has been used since the mid-1960s, but was only confirmed as a useful preventative treat-

ment for breast cancer in 1990.

The trial is being funded by the United Kingdom Co-ordinating Committee for Cancer Research, comprising the CRC, Imperial Cancer Research Fund and the Medical Research Council. It will run in parallel with another tamoxifen trial which began recruiting volunteers earlier this year, and aims to see if the drug can prevent breast cancer in healthy women with a family history of the disease. This earlier trial ran into ethical problems because of the risks of giving healthy women such a potent hormonal drug. The MRC has twice refused to back it but is believed to be reconsidering its position.



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news

Shankill drives a road to peace across old battlefields



Billy Hutchinson: "The acid test will come when we actually get into all-party talks and start talking about settlements" Photograph: Kelvin Boyes

One year on from the loyalist ceasefire, a terrorist turned politician explains why the truce is set to last

DAVID MCKITTRICK
Ireland Correspondent

Twenty years ago Billy Hutchinson, as a young Shankill Road loyalist, believed the best way to deal with republicanism was through violence. He was part of an Ulster Volunteer Force gang which shot dead two men on the Falls Road, an action which put him behind bars for 15 years.

Today his view of how to deal with republicans has changed dramatically. "One of the things that would worry me is if people try to screw Sinn Féin," he says now. "I don't think anybody should be trying to do that. I don't think there's anything in it for anybody to screw them."

In place of the old belligerence and indeed the ferocity for which the loyalist paramilitary groups were known, there is now, according to Mr Hutchinson, a new political way of looking at things.

"We need to convince Sinn

Fein that there is a democratic process and that they can have a role in it as a democratic party. I think we should assist them in every way to come into it fully," he says.

Mr Hutchinson, an intense man now aged 39, is a leading member of the Progressive Unionist Party, which he describes as political confidants of the illegal UVF. The PUP and the Ulster Democratic Party, which speaks for the illegal Ulster Defence Association, have made a considerable impact since the loyalist ceasefire, surprising and heartening many that such moderate messages should come from such an unexpected quarter.

The past year has seen many contacts with government, with Mr Hutchinson leading PUP delegations on 15 occasions to meet senior civil servants and ministers.

One of the main points in these discussions has been the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons, the issue on which the Government and Sinn Féin have been deadlocked for many months. The loyalist view, as set out by Billy Hutchinson, is actually not far from that of the republicans.

"For me it's whether the guns are being used or not being used that is the most important thing," he says. "If people can guarantee that they're not going to be used then I wouldn't be very concerned. If the Sinn Féin position is that it should never happen then I think there's something wrong with that, but I don't think decommissioning should be a pre-condition for talks."

"In our discussions with the Government we talked about the ways in which weapons could be decommissioned. For example, there could be some sort of agreement that people transporting guns would not be arrested."

"We talked about whether people would drive them to police stations, or dig up caches then leave them at a certain place and inform the police. We talked about whether the people that handed them over might be forensically connected to the guns. Those were the sort of things that were thrown up for discussion, but no answers were ever given."

Mr Hutchinson believes it has been a good year for his movement, though he is disappointed that all-party talks have not been convened, that prisoners have not been released and that more trust has not been built up.

He is, however, convinced that the leaders of loyalist paramilitarism have no intention of going back to war: "One thing I'm confident of is that the loy-

alists are united and 100 per cent behind the peace. Now I wouldn't say there is not an appetite for war among some individuals - it would be wrong to say everybody's on board for peace."

"But those people will abide by what the leadership say. The analysis we gave over a year ago was the correct one, that there was no sell-out. The acid test will come when we actually move into all-party talks and we start talking about settlements. I think that's when people will start to get jittery, whenever the questions start coming up about organisations being disbanded and so on. But that's way down the road."

In the meantime, he is involved not just in a peace process but in a learning process. During the past year, he and his colleagues have met dozens of people from all over the world, ranging from American senators to South African academics.

He says: "We're still learning how to put ourselves in someone else's shoes and see it from their point of view, whether they're the British government or Sinn Féin."

"I've been particularly surprised how the mainstream Unionist politicians have reacted to us - they treat us as non-people, they don't understand where we, or indeed the republicans, are coming from."

"When David Trimble was elected [as leader of the Ulster Unionist Party], my first reaction was shock-horror, but in fact, like us, he's meeting a wide range of people and up to now he hasn't put a foot wrong."

And so to the key question: how strong is the peace? "It's as strong as the republicans and loyalists want it to be. I believe there is a feeling within the republican and loyalist leaderships that they don't want to put their people through any more of the trauma of the last 25 years."

"The worrying thing for me is that both are ready for war and for peace. At the moment we're all in peace mode but we shouldn't be under any illusions - people can go back to war whenever they want, they've got the capabilities."

"I want to make sure that they don't. We're still waiting for the peace process and the political process to merge together, and for real talks to start. Once that happens then I think we're on our way."

"But we need to sit down and thrash out an agreement with all the parties and with those who represent the people who carried out the violence for the last 25 years. That's the only time that the peace will be signed, sealed and delivered."

IRA not alone in stockpiling illegal weapons

In the long-running dispute between the Government and Sinn Féin over decommissioning paramilitary weapons, it is often overlooked that the IRA is not the only illegal organisation with illicit stocks of arms.

The extreme Protestant groups have hundreds of guns which they used, in the two years before the ceasefires, to kill more people than did the IRA. One reason why the loyalist guns are rarely highlighted is that they have, as Billy Hutchinson illustrates, embraced the peace process with such unexpected and evidently genuine enthusiasm.

After years of relying on the power of the gun, the loyalists have developed a curious empathy with the republicans: they know where they are coming from, they know how difficult it is to make peace, and they know the heavy price which all would pay in going back to war.

The striking difference between loyalists and republicans is the apparent lack of strains and pressures within the extreme Protestant underworld. Within Sinn Féin and the IRA, there are signs that many in the republican grassroots have become frustrated and dissatisfied with the pace and direction of the peace process.

On the loyalist side, however, there is no real sign of any real pressure for a return to war. But that is not to say that paramilitarism is dwindling: the UVF and UDA are still out there, carrying out punishment beatings and showing no sign of decommissioning their weapons. The question of who killed leading loyalist William Elliott earlier this month remains unanswered. The transformation of what was the most militant part of loyalism into an

Analysis

element hungry for negotiation, which is prepared to compromise, is only part of the wider Unionist scene. The recent election of David Trimble, a hardliner, as leader of the main Ulster Unionist party shows that some sections of Protestant opinion are on the move towards a tougher line.

It seems unlikely that parties such as the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) and UDP will make a spectacular electoral dent in Mr Trimble's party. Old voting patterns are notoriously difficult to change in Northern Ireland, and many Unionists will consider the new parties too working-class, too left-leaning and too close to the paramilitants. These parties are therefore probably destined to remain on the fringe.

But the fact that the loyalist paramilitaries have embraced politics with such relish is already having an effect. In the past, many Unionist politicians were able to point over their shoulders at the violent Protestant groups and cite them as evidence of how hardline their grassroots were.

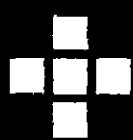
Now the old patterns are changing: the paramilitary groups are no longer willing to provide the muscle for politicians to use. This means the politicians will be compelled to rely less on threats and more on straightforward politics.

The fact that they will henceforth have to depend on force of argument, rather than the argument of force, is changing the face of Unionist politics.

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Police want law laid down in plain English

JASON BENNETTO
Crime Correspondent

Police chiefs want much of the country's criminal law – some of which they believe is "legal gobbledegook" – to be rewritten into plain English. They believe that vague and confusingly written laws have led to wrong judgments and made the legal system inaccessible.

Chief constables are to press the Government to introduce changes to the wording of the laws, many of which are more than 100 years-old, in England and Wales and introduce a new, single criminal code.

He added that it was a good

example of "legal gobbledegook". Under the Act the definition of wounding or causing grievous bodily harm with intent is "whosoever shall unlawfully and maliciously by any means whatsoever wound or cause any grievous bodily harm to any person with intent to do some

Legal jargon

Under the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, an assault is committed "when the defendant intentionally or recklessly causes his victim to apprehend the immediate infliction of unlawful force".

grievous bodily harm to any person, or with intent to resist or prevent the lawful apprehension or detainer of any person".

The police want the Act reformed – a measure proposed by the Law Commission, the Government's advisory body, in 1992, but not carried out. The police say gradual re-writing of criminal law should eventually lead to a criminal code or a single plain English.

The Association of Chief Police Officers argues that "it

should be possible to agree plain English charges that are comprehensible to police officer, suspect, victim and citizen".

The recommendation to simplify legal language was one of a package of criminal justice measures that the association will be campaigning for in the coming year.

An agenda paper, *In Search of Criminal Justice*, published yesterday at its autumn conference in Coventry, also calls for greater use of video evidence in court, changes in the law to allow previous convictions and hearsay evidence to be admitted in court under certain circumstances, legislation on disclosure of evidence and binding pre-trial reviews, cutting down on the administrative work in courts and providing better treatment of victims and witnesses.

Civil rights lawyers are concerned about some of these proposed changes, particularly allowing the prosecution to disclose less evidence to the defence who will have to reveal more before the trial. They believe this will swing the legal system too far in favour of the police and prosecution.



Première venue: The £25m theatre in Basel, Switzerland, built for Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Phantom of the Opera" Photograph: Clive Barde

Ghostly triumph booked in for perpetuity

First Night: 'The Phantom of the Opera'; Musical Theater Messe, Basel

DAVID LISTER

Both the show and the business elements of showbusiness were played out here yesterday as Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber's artistic colonisation of Europe moved on to a new plane.

Indeed, the plane was one of the more remarkable elements. A Crossair Saab 2000 aeroplane had its fuselage painted with the *Phantom of the Opera* logo and mask, dwarfing the Swiss flag. As it took off from Heathrow yesterday, the climax to the title track played through the cabin. The official carrier for the show in Basel, it will bring people from cities all over Europe with *Phantom* ticket hot lines already installed in Swiss and German airports.

Last night was the unveiling of the £25m marble, steel and

glass 1500-seat theatre that Basle businessmen and city fathers built solely to hand to Sir Andrew's Really Useful Group to boost the economy of the city. Sir Andrew's team will run the theatre and probably stage the *Phantom of the Opera* in perpetuity. Should that show ever close, he has an "on-going programming option" to replace it.

But it won't be closing for a while. Before last night's Swiss premiere, his staff said they had sold £10m of advance tickets. And they didn't even have to pay for the £150,000 banquet after the show. Basle's grateful businessmen coughed up.

The show part of showbusiness began earlier with a press conference in the city hall where the composer faced a bewildering mixture of lavish tributes and hostile questions.



Sir Andrew: 'Phantom' story was 'load of hokum'

First, Herr Uli Vischer, vice-president of Basle city government, said that Basle shared certain qualities with Britain including a tendency to understate the value of its own achievements. The vice-president then continued: "With all probability, Basle is honoured today

by the most distinguished visit from the United Kingdom since Her Majesty the Queen was greeted here 15 years ago ... Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber is the man who inspires, promotes and enlivens with his genius again and again."

But, he was asked, what do you say to a Swiss newspaper which calls your music a patchwork of other composers?"

"I say rubbish," replied Sir Andrew.

And what do you say to claims that you are the Mozart of today, asked another.

"I say rubbish," replied Sir Andrew again.

Then the normally shy composer began to discourse unusually freely. Asked if he would write with Sir Tim Rice again, he damned with conspicuous faint praise: "I don't think it's likely. He has his own career now as an occasional lyricist with Disney, and I don't think we're on the same wavelength now."

He tried to deter questions about profits from the show – which go to the Really Useful Group – saying he was merely a shareholder in the group. The holding was 70 per cent.

And he told how *Phantom* began. He bought a book of it for 50 cents at a New York bookstall, thought the story "a load of hokum" and handed it to the director, Hal Prince, who wanted to direct a romantic musical. When they did collaborate on it, Sir Andrew said yesterday, "There was a lot of love in it for me. I wrote the role of Christine for my then wife Sarah Brightman and a lot of passion went into it."

The show, performed in German with Hal Prince again directing, looked and sounded splendid. In December Sir Andrew takes over a new theatre in Frankfurt purpose-built for his *Sunset Boulevard*. Britain's passionate one-man export drive rolls on.

Right to silence plea fails

HEATHER MILLS
Home Affairs Correspondent

Attempts by defence lawyers to limit the effects of new legislation that erodes the centuries-old "right to silence" were rejected by the Court of Appeal yesterday.

In a test case judgment that will be welcomed by the Government as support for its tough stance on law and order, Lord Taylor, the Lord Chief Justice, said he was not prepared to "drive a coach and horses" through the provisions of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act.

Since the Act came into force earlier this year, defendants who choose not to answer po-

lice questions or give evidence in court can no longer rely on a once-enshrined right that no adverse inferences must be drawn from their silence.

The legislation has been condemned by lawyers and human rights groups who claim it distorts the principle of "innocent until proven guilty" and who intend to challenge it through the European courts.

But that argument failed to convince the judges in the cases of three people convicted after they chose to remain silent. Lord Taylor rejected the argument that the burden of proof was watered down by obliging an accused person to testify if he wished to avoid conviction. The right to silence had not

been abolished, he said. No one could be forced to give evidence and no one could be convicted solely because of their silence.

The prosecution still had to establish a *prima facie* case, guilt still had to be proved beyond reasonable doubt, and inferences to be drawn from a defendant's silence were just one factor in the case. Further, a court could refuse to draw adverse inferences if the circumstances of the case justified it.

In two of the cases, however, the judges quashed the convictions because the trial judges, dealing with unfamiliar legislation, had failed to give adequate directions to the jury about what inferences they could draw from the defendants' silence.

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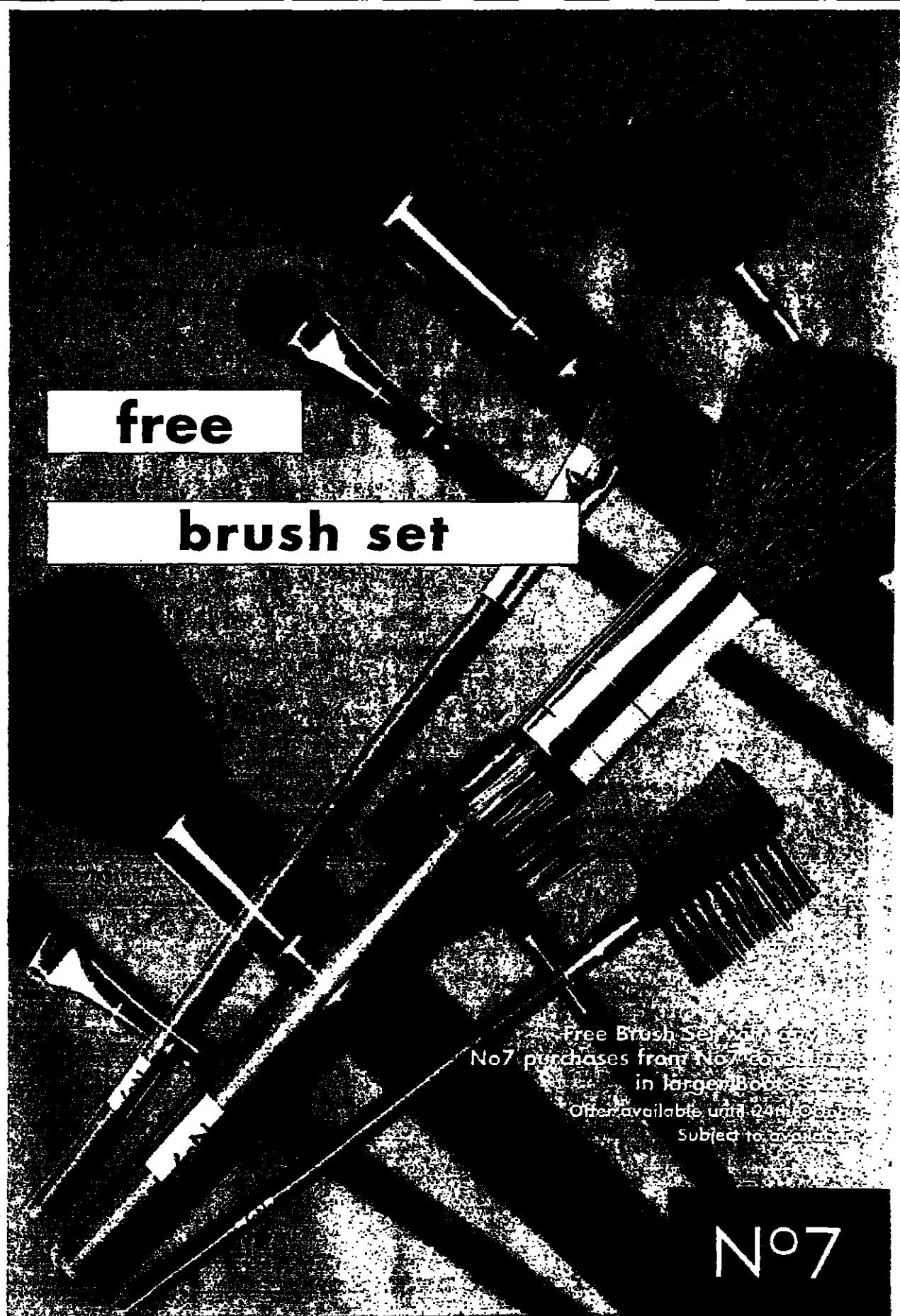
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Fighting mars start of Bosnia ceasefire

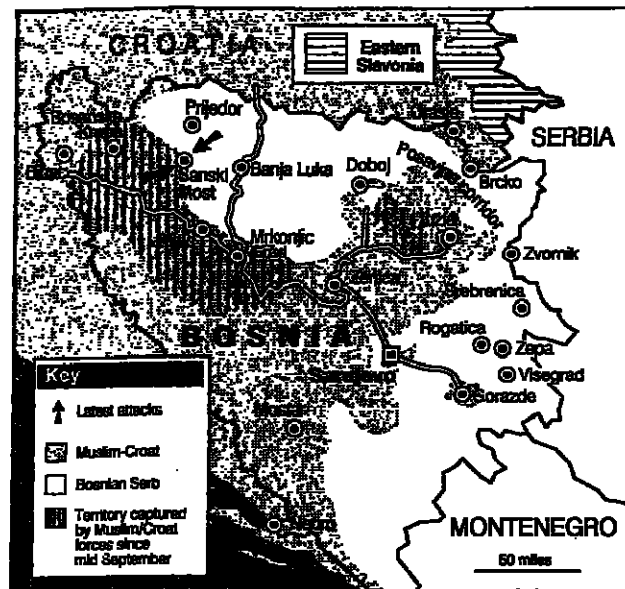
CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Defence Correspondent

All was quiet on most of the 600 miles of Bosnian battle front yesterday after three-and-a-half years of fighting. But the ceasefire, which came into force at one minute past midnight, was ignored in Sanski Most, which the Bosnian government's Fifth Corps claimed to have captured on Tuesday, and where serious fighting was still reported last night.

Sanski Most marks the high tide of the Muslim advance towards the key Serb-held city of Banja Luka, and it is not surprising that the struggle has continued, although street fighting is unusual in Bosnia. "There is definitely no ceasefire there," one witness reported after returning to the government-held town of Bihac.

The government in Sarajevo accused the Serbs of making a further push, and President Alija Izetbegovic warned that the continued fighting threatened the ceasefire, saying: "We will have to respond to [the attack] if it does not stop." He added, however, that he was still optimistic peace would be achieved.

A few other ceasefire violations were reported, but the UN considered them insignificant. Although everyone who knows the Bosnian conflict was cautious yesterday, there was



optimism that the ceasefire, which had been delayed 48 hours, would hold. "Something tells me this one could last," said the French Foreign Minister, Herve de Charette.

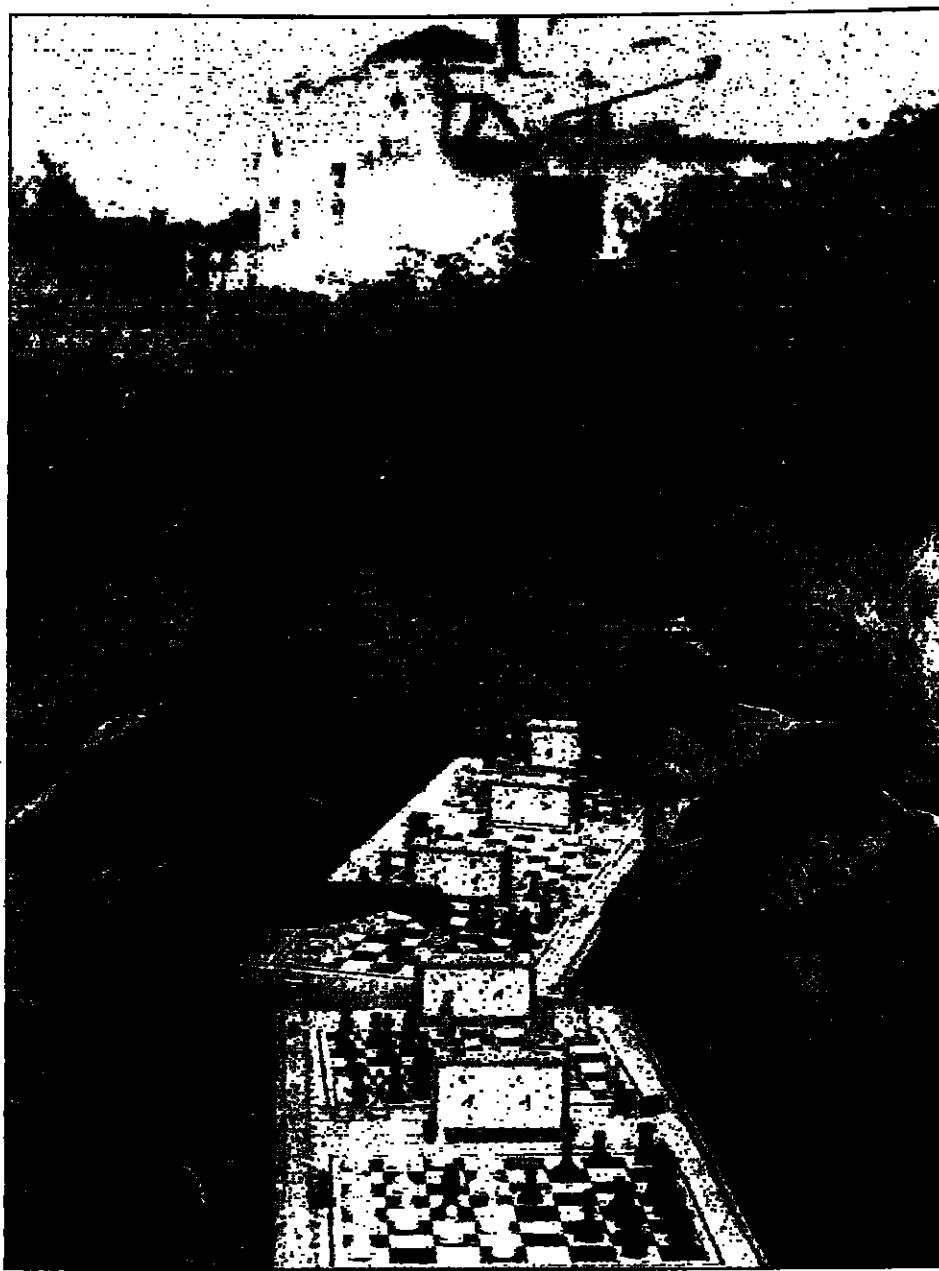
Reported violations were mostly in the north-east, around Tuzla and the Posavina corridor, which links the two main Serb-held areas, and around Sarajevo. A UN convoy heading from Sarajevo to the Muslim enclave of Gorazde was halted by mines and had to turn back.

Normally there are about 500 firing incidents a day, with perhaps 300 involving heavy weapons. Yesterday the UN reported fewer than 20. "It's definitely holding," a UN spokesman in Zagreb said. "It's far better than I anticipated, expected, hoped". Lieutenant Colonel Chris Vernon, a UN spokesman in Sarajevo, said it was militarily impossible to halt entirely the fighting after the few hours' notice which local commanders had received.

On Wednesday the over-extended Muslim and Croat forces claimed to have captured Sanski Most and Mrkonjic Grad in a last-minute scramble for bargaining counters, an attack bitterly opposed by war-weary Bosnian Serbs. Mrkonjic Grad was the last objective on the key road which runs along most of the new Bosnian government front line. But exhaustion among the troops, and the feeling that it was no longer worth dying, appeared to reinforce orders from above to stop fighting.

The UN accused the Bosnian Serbs of "the worst kind of ethnic cleansing" in the days before the ceasefire. A spokesman, Joe Sills, said about 6,000 non-Serbs, mostly Muslims, had been forced out of the area around Banja Luka, scene of some of the worst "ethnic cleansing" during the earlier part of the war.

The five nation contact group - the US, Russia, Britain, France and Germany - is due to meet in Moscow next Tuesday. Full peace talks between the warring factions are due to begin in the US around the end of the month, but the Bosnian government warned it would boycott them unless other conditions were met. These included opening up the road to the Gorazde enclave, and opening a road out of Sarajevo.



Pawns' game: Bosnian Serbs mark the ceasefire by playing chess Photograph: Reuters

Austrian coalition fails to last year

ADRIAN BRIDGE
Central Europe Correspondent

After less than one year in office, Austria's ruling coalition split apart yesterday plunging the country into an early general election which could transform its political landscape.

The split between the governing Socialists (SPO) and People's (ÖVP) parties followed the collapse of attempts to bridge their differences over how to reduce a spiralling budget deficit. The SPO wanted most of a Schöbner (£3.8bn) reduction to be achieved through higher taxes. The more conservative ÖVP wanted cuts in Austria's generous welfare payments and state subsidies.

According to Wolfgang Schüssel, the ÖVP leader, the dispute reflected a "fundamental battle over [the] direction" of the country. Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, the SPO leader, believed the differences were reconcilable and accused his ÖVP counterpart of a "flight from responsibility" by precipitating fresh elections, now due on 17 December.

Certainly much of the pressure for yesterday's move came from the ambitious Mr Schüssel, who only took over the leadership of his party in April. With the ÖVP riding high in the opinion polls, he undoubtedly sees a chance for his party to overtake the SPO as the country's dominant political force and for himself to replace Mr Vranitzky as chancellor.

But Mr Schüssel's gamble could backfire and lead to a further surge of support for Jörg Haider, the populist leader of the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ), whose declared aim is to smash the post-war grip on power enjoyed by Austria's two main parties. "The collapse of the coalition after less than one year is a clear signal that the system has ceased to work satisfactorily," said Klaus Fandl, a professor of political science at Salzburg university. "Many traditional supporters of the mainstream parties may look elsewhere; it could well play into Haider's hands."

The SPO and ÖVP have ruled Austria, either singly or together, since the Second World War. In addition to political power, they have devised an elaborate system of patronage - dividing jobs and even flats along party lines. Over the past 10 years both parties have seen a steady erosion of their support as a disenfranchised electorate has turned increasingly to the populist, xenophobic Mr Haider or, on the left, to the Green party.

In last October's general election the SPO's share of the vote sank to just 35 per cent while the ÖVP scored 28 per cent. Mr Haider, who took over as leader of the FPÖ in 1986 when it was standing at about 5 per cent, celebrated another triumph: a record 23 per cent.

Bomber's motives 'unclear'

TONY BARBER
Europe Editor

Ten days after President Kiro Gligorov of Macedonia was almost killed by a car bomb in Skopje, government officials and police investigators are uncertain if the assassination attempt was related to Balkan politics or organised crime. No group or individual has claimed responsibility, no arrests have been made, and all the Macedonian authorities are saying is that the attack bore the marks of a professional killer or hit squad from abroad.

"The way the assassination attempt was carried out points to an international terrorist organisation, but for the moment we are not announcing anything," the deputy interior minister, Dime Gjurov, said on Tuesday.

However, the authorities have released a description of the man who bought the Citroën that exploded in Skopje on 3 October, causing serious eye and head injuries to Mr Gligorov, 78, and killing his driver as they passed by in the president's car. He is said to be blond, 5ft 7ins tall, and aged about 30.

This man bought the Citroën in Skopje on 24 September for 650 German marks (£290), according to the newspaper *Nova Makedonija*. It said he spoke a Serbo-Croat dialect common to a region of northern Croatia.

Immediately after the attack, some Balkan experts pointed the finger of guilt at Macedonian nationalists opposed to Mr Gligorov's recent concessions to Greece on the flag and constitution of his young state. Mr Gligorov had further annoyed the nationalist opposition by seeking better relations with Serbia.

The main group opposed to Mr Gligorov's policies has been the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (VMRO), a party with a rich tradition of political violence earlier in this century. However, VMRO's leadership has vigorously denied involvement.

Some argue the would-be killers are more likely to be connected with gangs involved in the burgeoning drug trade and money-laundering in Macedonia.

Italian minister hounds judges

ANDREW GUMBEL
Rome

The French anti-corruption magistrate Renaud van Ruymbeke once admitted that his ambition was to nail a government minister; conversely, it seems that the lifetime ambition of the Italian minister, Filippo Mancuso, is to nail an anti-corruption magistrate.

Ever since Mr Mancuso, a career just and former appeals court prosecutor, was appointed justice minister last January, he has been single-minded in his attempts to discredit the "clean hands" magistrates in Milan, whose investigations led to the collapse of the old political order two years ago.

Mr Mancuso, 74, belongs to the old school of magistrates who never challenged the system and never dared turn themselves into public personalities. He seems to be waging a vendetta against the new generation of judicial movers and shakers, bent on revolutionising Italian society.

Mr Mancuso went into even higher gear this week, opening new investigations into two of the Milan magistrates, Gherardo Colombo and Paolo Ielo.

He has refused to resign, despite several no-confidence motions proposed by parliament.

Soon after his appointment, Mr Mancuso sent ministry inspectors to investigate whether the Milan magistrates had abused their office in their attempts to indict the former prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi. This caused a furore: when Mr Berlusconi's own justice minister, Alfredo Biondi, tried to do the same thing in July 1994, he was forced to backtrack.

Mr Mancuso's inspectors failed to turn up any dirt, so he fired them (later reinstating all but two under pressure from colleagues and public opinion). That was not the end of the story. Feeling abandoned by his Prime Minister, Lamberto Dini, he described Mr Dini as "servile" to the political forces supporting his government.

Under Italy's constitution, the only way to get rid of an irritating minister is for the whole government to resign. Mr Dini plans to do just that when his temporary mandate runs out in the next few weeks. Mr Mancuso has only one friend left in the world, Mr Berlusconi, who has his own reasons to dislike the Milan magistrates.

Papandreou under fire

DINA KYRIAKIDOU
Reuters

Athens — The Greek Prime Minister, Andreas Papandreou who founded the Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Pasek) 20 years ago and has ruled it with an iron fist ever since, faced renewed calls yesterday for his resignation.

Several Pasek MPs brushed aside his warnings on Wednesday that he would no longer tolerate dissenting voices, and continued to demand that the 76-year-old leader step down. "Mr Papandreou has completed his contribution, and he must step aside," a former minister, Dimitris Tsovolas, told a rally after resigning from Pasek.

He stopped short of announcing the formation of a new party but told the rally, attended by six Socialist deputies, the time had come for justice.

Mr Papandreou's speech to the Pasek central committee on Wednesday blamed rebels for hurting the government's image as opinion polls showed the party's popularity sliding. "A small clique of high-level party members is becoming a circle of self-destruction... Cowardice and ingratitude will no longer be tolerated," he said.

He dared rebels to set up their own party and take their case to the electorate, but did not expel them from Pasek, as he has done with dissenters in the past. "The picture was sad. The once-indisputable leader just read a prepared speech and left," said the liberal daily newspaper *Eleftherotipia*.

The dissenters, rallying around prominent members known as the "Gang of Four", accuse Mr Papandreou of losing touch with reality and letting his "court" rule the country.

Criticism has focused on his wife, Dimitra Liani, 40, who was appointed in 1993 as his chief-of-staff, giving her power over his daily agenda and his office.

Among those concerned about the party's future and eager to fill Mr Papandreou's shoes are an ex-industry minister, Costas Simitis, a former European Commissioner, Vasso Papandreou, and a former European affairs minister, Theodoros Pangalos. They have openly called on him to take on a less prominent role and open the door to his succession.

Mr Papandreou, who staged a political comeback when he returned to office in 1993, said he had no intention of being a figurehead prime minister, and vowed to use the two remaining years of his term to push his programme through. But Mr Simitis said: "Papandreou has chosen to deny reality."

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مركز الامم

Ukraine near deal to close Chernobyl

Kiev has lowered the price the West must pay to shut down its deadly reactor; reports Phil Reeves

Moscow — After weeks of wrangling over money, the Ukraine and the West last night were inching towards an agreement over the terms by which Chernobyl, scene of the worst nuclear accident in history, will finally be shut down by the end of the decade.

Following talks with officials from the Group of Seven industrialised countries, the Ukrainians indicated they had relaxed a demand for \$4bn (£2.53bn) as a condition for closing Chernobyl's two remaining reactors, although they made clear that they still expected a large sum in Western aid.

If the talks finally produce a settlement, there will be widespread relief among governments across Europe, although it will do nothing to ease the anxiety about the hazards posed by the entire nuclear sector in Russia and its former satellites — concerns ranging from theft of components for weapons, to the risk of a radiation leak from ill-supervised, under-funded and decrepit installations.

This week the environmental group, Greenpeace, launched a scathing attack on

Russia's lack of safety standards, distributing government documents which showed that last year Gosatomnadzor, the nation's nuclear safety inspectorate, found 38,599 safety violations at nuclear sites, but only took legal action in 13 cases. The inspectorate had also conducted safety tests on more than 17,500 nuclear-related workers; almost 1,300 failed.

These statistics add weight to the alarming findings of the "Most Dangerous Reactors" project, a group of experts convened by the US Department of Energy to alert policy-makers about the dangers of foreign nuclear power plants. In a recent report, following a review of nine Soviet-designed reactors, they described a catalogue of problems including deficiencies in design, weak and incompetent national regulatory bodies, and under-funding.

The American researchers provisionally named the four most dangerous plants as Chernobyl, Kozloduy in Bulgaria, Kola in north-western Russia and Ignalina in Lithuania. Using a complex formula to assess the likelihood of an accident, all

four plants received a "D" grade on a scale from A (representing low risk) to F (high risk). Extracts from their conclusions make sobering reading. Ignalina, Lithuania: "Conditions that are deemed so important in the West for preventing accidents — like a conservative 'forgiving' plant design, adequate funds and strong regulatory oversight — are simply absent at Ignalina," says the report.

The nuclear power station, which provides 80 per cent of the ex-Soviet republic's electricity, became the responsibility of Lithuania's nuclear safety inspectorate, Vatesi, when it declared independence in 1991. "Vatesi is years away from being a recognised authority with a strong scientific base," it says.

The report's authors were scathing about the plant's general safety systems and shoddy construction, but express even greater concern over the risk of the reactor cavity being over-pressurised. This "could result in an uncooled core being directly exposed to the atmosphere with no barriers to prevent the release of ra-



After the event: The Chernobyl disaster turned out to be the worst nuclear accident in history

dioisotopes, as was so aptly shown at Chernobyl.

"A major radiation release could affect the health of tens of thousands of people in the region, with secondary fall-out occurring in any number of nearby countries, like Poland, Latvia, Russia or Sweden." Like Chernobyl, the plant uses boiling-water, pressure-tube RBMK reactors — the kind "generally considered the least safe by

Western safety experts". Some 200,000 people live within a 30-mile radius of Ignalina.

Kozloduy, northern Bulgaria: Operating this power plant on the Romanian border is a "truly high stakes gamble". The report cites serious design faults, a dangerously under-sized emergency core-cooling system, inadequate containment and "a legacy of poor safety culture".

When international inspectors ordered its first generation water-cooled reactors to be shut down four years ago, the Bulgarians obeyed. But they restarted them a year later, "without correcting a number of design deficiencies". One of its reactors is currently closed for safety checks, but another was recently restarted by the Bulgarian government, which claims that it cannot do without

the power as the winter approaches. Some 150,000 people live within a 30-mile radius.

Kola, north-western Russia: Kola is the primary cause of a threefold increase in the number of incidents at Russia's old Soviet-style VVER-440 reactors in recent years, says the report. About once a year, Kola has a near-accident. "Poor employee morale is increasing chances of human error and sabotage."

Spacemen trapped by rocketing prices

PHIL REEVES
Moscow

It will be one of those awkward long-distance telephone phone calls that requires a certain degree of managerial skill. "Look, we know you will have been up there, orbiting around the earth on your own for four months. But you know what the budget's like. You are just going to have to stay there for a bit."

The Russian controllers of the Mir Space station have yet to inform their three cosmonauts that they may well have to spend another 39 days floating around in space, allegedly because of difficulty over cash.

Officials said yesterday that funding problems have delayed the construction of a booster rocket which would have carried a replacement crew to the station, allowing Thomas Reiter, a German, and Russians Yuri Gidzenko and Alexander Avdeyev to return to earth after 130 days.

So, plans are under discussion to extend the mission of the men — up there since the beginning of September — by more than six weeks. It is unclear how the crew will take it, but the Russian Space Agency yesterday was looking on the bright side.

"They will have enough food, water and air, since the Progress cargo ship that docked with the Mir (on Wednesday) brought more than enough supplies," said Anatoly Tkachev, after explaining that the construction of a Progress booster for the Soyuz-22 spacecraft is taking longer than planned because the production plant lacks funding.

"We are going to tell them quite soon, and I am sure they will be pleased about it — all cosmonauts, like pilots, like to fly," he said. "They are all in good physical shape, especially Reiter, and they'll have time for more research."

The new Soyuz rocket, which will put up a Soyuz TM-23 capsule carrying relief cosmonauts, Yuri Onufriyenko and Yuri Usachev, will now not be ready until 21 February.

The mission, part of the international effort Europeace '95, consists of biological, geophysical and technological experiments. Mr Reiter is going to take a spacewalk on 20 October 20, to install equipment outside the Mir. He will have time, by the sounds of it, for quite a long and leisurely stroll.

IN BRIEF

Graf's 'special tax deal' to be probed

Bonn — German politicians decided to launch a special inquiry into allegations that the tennis star Steffi Graf was given too much special treatment by her regional tax authorities. The parliament of Baden-Württemberg state, where Graf's tax affairs are being investigated, voted for the investigation.

Graf's father, Peter, was jailed in August to prevent him fleeing or concealing evidence to support accusations that he and his daughter evaded millions of marks in tax. The Grafs says they struck a deal with the state's tax authorities in 1993, agreeing on their tax liability.

Chirac visits dead bomb suspect's home

Vaucluse, France — President Jacques Chirac held talks in the home town of Khaled Kelkal, an Algerian-born suspect in a string of bombings who was shot dead by police. Mr Chirac met community leaders and activists. Kelkal was gunned down by paramilitary gendarmes as he tried to escape a police dragnet two weeks ago.

Russians drop case against puppet show

Moscow — Russian legal authorities said they had halted criminal proceedings against the satirical "Kukly" puppet show. The acting Prosecutor-General Oleg Gaydardov said the case initiated by his predecessor, Aleksei Ilyushenko, who was sacked on Sunday, had been dropped but gave no details. In a case launched last July, "Kukly" was accused of denigrating President Boris Yeltsin and senior government officials.

False prophet?

London — Husain Rashid Hassan (left), said to be a former confidant of President Saddam Hussein, surfaced in London, wearing a false beard and moustache, and urged Iraqis to rise against their leader. But Mr Hassan, refused to reveal basic details about his recent history, thus making it difficult to verify any of his claims.



French fishermen fire on Spanish trawler

Paris — French fishermen fired on a Spanish trawler they claimed was trying to destroy their drift nets, wounding two Spanish crew members. The incident, reminiscent of last year's "fishing wars", took place on Wednesday in the Gulf of Gascogne. The clash between the crews of the Spanish Manuel Herrera and the French *Crazy Horse* occurred as both vessels were fishing for white tuna. "It's not a war, but there is a group of guys making life impossible for us," one Spaniard said.

Earthquake shakes Mexican capital

Mexico City — An earthquake measuring 6.1 on the open-ended Richter scale shook Mexico City but there were no immediate reports of deaths or damage. The National University's earthquake centre said the tremor's epicentre was in western Mexico.

Iraqi cover-up for 'criminal' George Bush

Baghdad — A mosaic portrait of George Bush has been covered with a carpet, protecting it from people checking into Baghdad's Al-Rasheed Hotel. Three days before a referendum confirming Saddam Hussein's position as president of Iraq, workers covered the portrait of the former US president, which is captioned "George Bush is a Criminal". It has graced the hotel's threshold since soon after a stray cruise missile hit the hotel in 1993.

Turkey puts Reuters journalist on trial

HUGH POPE
Istanbul

Turkey's security apparatus formally targeted a foreign correspondent for the first time yesterday, putting an American reporter for Reuters news agency in the dock for breaching one of the country's many laws limiting freedom of expression.

A mixture of official politeness, the threat of a three-year jail sentence and trays of black tea in between times made the opening day of the trial a very Turkish affair. "Now, my girl," was the first question from the chief judge on the bench of the State Security Court, "how old

are you?" As he and everybody else in court knew, Aliza Marcus is a 33-year-old from New Jersey living in Istanbul. What nobody understands is what Turkey hopes to gain from launching a political trial against her and by extension her London-based employers.

Ms Marcus is charged with "inciting racial hatred" in a report last November about the burning and forcible evacuation of Kurdish villages. Its content differed little from Turkish and international reports on the widespread clearances, aimed at cutting Kurdish guerrillas off from food and recruits. But the Turkish nationalist old guard struck back, choosing a differ-

ent punishment from Turkey's occasional expulsions of "hostile" reporters. "She was asking for it, she wanted to be a hero. Well, she got her trial," said one senior Turkish official.

Given that Turkey's President Suleyman Demirel is due to visit Washington next week, and that the European Parliament may hold up a vital customs union deal until it sees better Turkish human rights, most observers had assumed that the case would be quietly dropped.

But the judges deliberately missed an obvious chance. According to Turkish press law, charges must be laid within six months. Ms Marcus wrote the article 11 months ago, but was

only charged eight months later, in July. This defence argument was rejected on a dubious technicality. "Such technical matters mean nothing. This is a political trial, like most trials in the state security courts," said a senior figure in Turkey's New Democracy Party.

Ms Marcus can be grateful that she is not being held in detention, as are more than 170 Turks convicted for what they have written or said. Although she pulled no punches in her reporting on the 11-year-old Kurdish war, Turkey's real target may be Reuters itself.

Two Turkish newspapers have in recent months taken the unusual step of criticising what

they saw as anti-Turkish bias in the agency, the world's principal source of news about the country. The Turks know their booming economy is a big profit centre for Reuters, whose main business is supplying financial news, not reports on Kurds.

Reuters is publicly backing Ms Marcus, who told the court that while she dictated the basic information in the story issued under her name, the final report was a joint effort by Reuters bureaux in Ankara, Istanbul and London. The judges have in turn demanded that Reuters identifies who really wrote the story before the next court hearing on 9 November.

Chirac overhauls missile arsenal

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Defence Correspondent

France has decided to proceed with a long-range, air-launched cruise missile with a nuclear warhead, and to scrap missiles based in ageing silos in south-east France, according to reliable sources in Paris. The French Defence Ministry and President Jacques Chirac's office yesterday said no final decision had been made but indicated it was imminent.

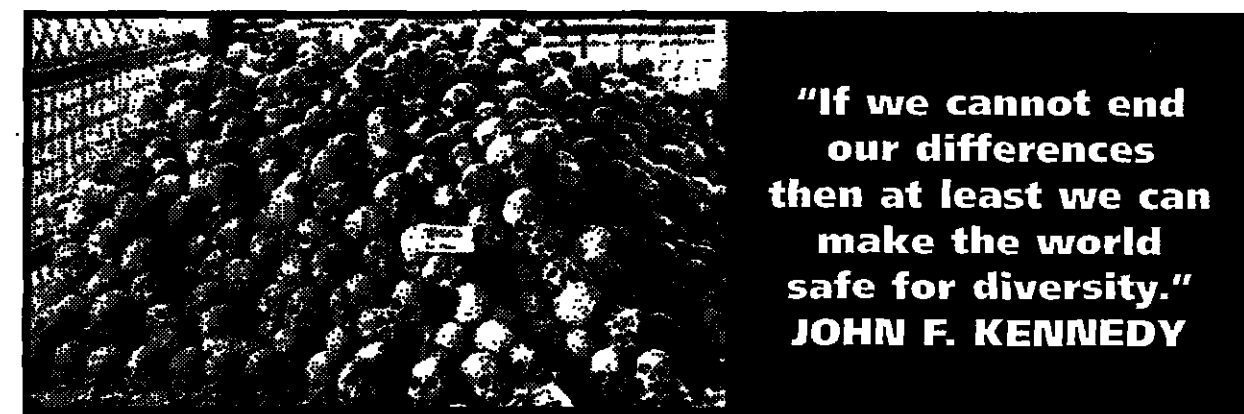
The authoritative defence newsletter TTU (*The Times*) said President Chirac had accepted recommendations from government defence experts to proceed with the new missile and close down silos in the Plateau d'Albion. Instead, the French deterrent, or Force de Frappe, will rely on air- and submarine-launched missiles and nuclear bombs carried on Mirage and Super Etendard aircraft. The recent French tests in the Pacific have been designed to test the warhead for a new submarine-launched missile, called the SN-75, and to enable France to evaluate future warheads — including that for the new cruise missile — using computer simulation.

The cruise missile, known as the Air-Sol de Longue Portée (ASLPL) — long-range air to ground — will enable France's

Rafale fighter bombers to hit targets from up to 900km, enabling them to stay out of range of most anti-aircraft defences.

A joint Anglo-French ASLPL was one option considered by the British Ministry of Defence to meet its requirement for a tactical Air-to-Surface Missile, or TASM, to replace its free-fall WE-177 nuclear bombs, until the idea was scrapped in 1993. Instead, the British have decided to concentrate on one nuclear system, the submarine-launched Trident missile. From about 2006, Trident will provide Britain's only nuclear deterrent.

The 18 French missiles in the Plateau d'Albion are SSBS S3s, introduced in 1981, with a range of 3,500km. They are housed in ageing silos which look increasingly vulnerable in view of the growing threat from missiles fired from North Africa. Britain and France, the only Western European nuclear powers, exchange information on nuclear strategy but have not yet co-operated on nuclear warhead design. Following the resumption of French nuclear tests in the South Pacific there have been allegations that Britain has received data from the French tests, but the Foreign Office yesterday said no direct data had been received and none had been requested.



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international

Scarred by the savage lash of Islamic justice

In Saudi Arabia, the girls are held down by a policewoman while they are whipped by a man. In the United Arab Emirates, they are ordered to lie on a bench to be lashed, though sometimes their hands are shackled above their heads.

As an Asian diplomat put it apologetically: "They must be restrained in case they run amok during the beatings." For supposed immoral behaviour or for theft, a Filipina, Sri Lankan or Indian maid in the Arab Gulf can expect up to 200 lashes with a bamboo cane no thicker than a man's small finger - administered by a man, of course.

Islamic "justice" had condemned hundreds of young women to be flogged in the Gulf in the past three years - well over 2,000, according to two Asian embassies who have vainly tried to protect their female

nationals - before deporting them home, penniless and in disgrace. A chance meeting with a boyfriend, an innocent friendship or a serious love affair, all have provoked the wrath of five-man sharia courts.

The cruelty of the whipping of women is carefully documented throughout the Gulf where, at least in the smaller emirates, newspapers carry daily reports of the flogging of young women who are often the victims of rape at the hands of their employers.

Many of the Islamic court judges who order the whippings are Saudis who have been given sharia court posts outside the kingdom. One Western medical worker who was herself imprisoned on fraudulent charges of "attempted seduction" has reported that several women in Saudi prisons "allege

that on being arrested by police or mutawana (religious police), they are sexually molested".

The savage prison flogging of young women is routine in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations. Take the case of the small Arab emirate of Sharjah. On 23 March this year, an Islamic court there ordered two women to receive 180 lashes for alleged adultery. On 2 April, an Asian housemaid was condemned by the Sharjah court to 140 lashes and a year in prison for an alleged extra-marital relationship. Two days later, the same court ordered two married Asian women to receive 180 lashes for alleged adultery.

Last month alone saw another spate of lashings. On 6 September, a 24-year-old woman was sentenced to 90 lashes of the cane for alleged adultery; four days later an



Robert Fisk, Middle East Correspondent, concludes his series on the cruel and brutal treatment of women in the Arab Gulf states

Asian maid was ordered to be whipped 180 times for "indulging in sex outside marriage". Another maid was ordered to be flogged 140 times for "adultery" on 18 September. Six days later, the Sharjah court ordered a 24-year-old Filipina maid to receive 180 strokes of the cane for adultery with a male Indian friend. The Philippines embassy tried to save Josepina Vergara from her punishment, but was ignored. "We went to see her and

she was, well, not happy about it," an official from the embassy said. "We tried to see what we could do, but the wheels of justice had turned."

"Justice" in the United Arab Emirates is always administered by a man who leans over the girl to cane her in the presence of both male and female prison officers and - sometimes, though not always - a doctor. "The man who lashes the girl has to hold a Koran under his right arm as he beats her.

This is to reduce the pain he can inflict, because he cannot move his upper arm for fear he will drop the Koran in the dust," an Asian who has been present at the lashing of a girl told the *Independent*. "But of course, it can still be very, very painful. If the girl screams too much and seems in too much pain, they will administer the punishment in instalments - 40 lashes now, 40 in a week's time and so on."

Arab courts insist that the lashings are the only way of ensuring that local "morality" is upheld - though the number of court-ordered floggings suggests the opposite. Islamic judges also claim that the women are not permanently scarred, even though this is clearly untrue. In the words of a Canadian nurse who worked in the largest hospital in the Saudi capital of Riyadh: "The

lashings are brutal and excruciatingly painful, they [the women] will bear the scars physically and psychologically for a long time."

Asian girls who become pregnant are almost inevitably doomed to be flogged. "If they think they are pregnant, they go to a local hospital - and if they are pregnant, the hospital will always ask them for their marriage certificate," another Asian diplomat said. "If the girls are not married, the hospital is bound by law to tell the police, and the girls are straight to the courts and are lashed. And then they are deported."

Among women subjected to the lash in the Saudi prison of Malaz in 1993 was an Indonesian maid who, according to a fellow prisoner, "had been starved and tortured for two

years. Her mistress had placed hot irons on her arms and had beaten her on the head with high-heeled shoes, penetrating her scalp."

The same witness, whose testimony has been made available to the *Independent*, recorded that "many of the prisoners were domestic helpers who had been raped or otherwise abused by their employers. If they attempted to run away or become pregnant, they were jailed and sometimes lashed."

An Asian diplomat at first refused to discuss the condition of maids who came to his embassy after being whipped. "It is very difficult for me," he said. "The Saudis don't want us to talk about this. But I must tell you that there is blood and there are scars. The way these girls are treated is simple cruelty; you could perhaps call it sadism."

Chinese 'broke promise to sink the CD pirates'

TERESA POOLE
Peking

All but one of China's CD factories are again churning out pirated discs, seven months after Peking pledged to crack down on intellectual property rights abuse.

Representatives of the United States music, film, and computer software industries said yesterday that China had reneged on an agreement with Washington to shut pirate disc manufacturers and open its market to overseas companies.

Eric Smith, president of the US-based International Intellectual Property Alliance, said that after the Sino-US piracy pact was agreed in February, illicit production in China briefly declined. But by mid-summer at least 27 plants were again making pirated CDs, CD videos, CD-Roms, and laser discs at a rate of 45 million a year.

"Everybody knows where they are. Everybody knows who owns them," Mr Smith said in Peking. Paul Ewing of Warner Music added: "The situation is almost back to where it was last year." The only marked difference has been a shift in output from cheap music CDs to higher-value CD-Roms, costing the copyright owners even more in lost sales.

When the 11th-hour accord was signed, narrowly averting a \$1bn trade war, the top US negotiator, Charlene Barshefsky, said: "There is no question that the key to this agreement will be implementation." As part of the deal, China must provide data every three months on the number of establishments raided, products seized and criminals prosecuted. A six-month "special enforcement period" was designated for investigating factories producing pirated CDs, laser discs, and CD-Roms. The US assistant trade representative, Lee Sands, is in Peking this week for discussions with Chinese officials over the limited progress in carrying out the piracy accord. Mr Sands said that the Chinese do not appear to be pursuing offenders with "any seriousness".

Clifford Borg-Marks, of the Business Software Alliance, said a CD-Rom containing 200 pieces of software with a legal retail price of \$25,000 (£16,000) had been bought on the streets of Shenzhen, in southern China, for 40 yuan (£3). Microsoft's Windows 95 was on sale within "a couple of days", he said, and had even been found in a Cyrillic version being smuggled from China into Russia. The delegation showed off a



Note of welcome: Chinese musicians relax before playing at the Foster's brewery commissioning ceremony in Tianjin yesterday - a far cry from the strained Sino-US relations over pirated American CDs. Photograph: AFP

selection of Chinese-manufactured discs purchased in Hong Kong, including an Adobe desktop publishing programme which should retail for \$1,500, but sold for \$8. However, only one Chinese wholesaler had been prosecuted since February, the delegation said.

Mr Smith said US manufacturers were well aware of the

links between pirate factory owners and local governments. Raids and seizures from retailers had increased, but the fines and penalties were too low to act as a deterrent. Robin Rolfe, executive director of the International Trademark Association, said the fines were little more than a "small business tax on profits" for the pirates.

An estimated 98 per cent of computer software in use in China is pirated. Under the Sino-US pact, government ministries were supposed to start purchasing legitimate software, but there has been no significant increase in sales. Chinese officials had been "fairly ambiguous" this week on improved market access for foreign films, videos,

books and music, even though this had been part of the anti-piracy agreement.

Meanwhile, on the streets near the *Independent* office, the pirate disc hawkers offering CDs and CD-Roms were out in force yesterday, operating out of a small Chinese supermarket, right under the nose of local police patrols.

'Gratitude' cash costs Japan's royals dear

RICHARD LLOYD PARRY
Tokyo

The brick of banknotes was nine inches thick, delicately wrapped in the finest hand-made paper. Bowing deeply and with profuse expressions of thanks, the small-town politician presented it to the frowning retainer. Once the business was completed, he was led to the back of the big house for an audience with the real recipient of the cash - his town's patron, Mr Big himself.

The scene, described by the mayor of a small city in central Japan, is familiar from a hundred Japanese movies. But in this case there was a difference. For this Mr Big was not a gang chief or corrupt politician trading favours for cash, but the late Prince Takamatsu, a member of the imperial family and an uncle of the Emperor. The contents of the mayor's parcel, and his annual visits to the prince's Tokyo residence, have publicly embarrassed Japan's reclusive imperial family.

The scandal has innocent origins. Every year Otsu, a humble lakeside city near Kyoto, holds a bicycle race, the Takamatsu Cup. The prince, a keen sportsman who died of cancer in 1987, attended regularly as a young man. The six-day race brings crowds of visitors to Otsu, and 32bn yen (£200m) in bets. But the bookies have not been the only beneficiaries. Since 1950, Otsu has been paying the Takamatsu family large sums of money simply for the use of its name. In 1978 the "gratitude money" amounted to 500,000 yen (£3,150 at today's rates). But last year, the prince's widow received 10m yen (£63,000). "We wanted to give a respectable gift," the embarrassed mayor explained, "the kind of sum that wouldn't appear discourteous". Records for the first 20 years of the race are lost, but since 1971 the city's courtesy to the Takamatsu family has amounted to 122m yen (£765,000).

The arrangement, unknown to all but a few city officials, was uncovered by a Communist member of Otsu council, and the scandal quickly spread. Potentially, this was more than an embarrassment. Apart from the shady details about wads of bank notes and the secret handovers, the affair raised serious legal questions. Article 8 of Japan's constitution states: "No property can be given to, or received by, the Imperial House", and the Imperial House Economy Law requires permission from the Diet for gifts of more than 1.6m yen (£10,000). The prince's family clearly had broken the law.

Within a week, another gratitude scam had been uncovered, involving the Emperor's cousin, Prince Tomohito, who netted 22m yen from a cycle race in another city. Last week, after an investigation by the Imperial Household Agency, the ministry which oversees royal affairs, the matter was brought to a hasty conclusion. Both city councils received cheques recouping their donations.

"Gratitude money above 1m yen is far above the socially acceptable level, even if the money was offered to the imperial

families," the agency said. "The public does not condone such practices." The agency's director general declared: "The families accepted the money as donations. They must not have been aware of proper procedures required by the law."

Plenty of questions remain unanswered. Could members of the imperial household have been unaware of an article of the constitution? And, as servant, treasurer and social secretary to the prince, was the agency as ignorant of the donations as it suggested?

Even more interesting is the light the affair casts on the status of the imperial family. Direct criticism of the imperial institution is still taboo in Japan, partly for fear of ultra-nationalists who threaten radical nationalists. But if the media seldom makes a target of royalty, it does not display exaggerated respect either, as the recent scandal showed. The story broke in the liberal *Asahi Shimbun*, but even



Prince Tomohito at Oxford: Did well from cycle races

the conservative *Yomiuri* was outspoken in its criticism, urging an open debate and expressing incredulity at the Imperial Household Agency's explanation.

The most poignant aspect of the affair is the light it casts on imperial finances. Outside the Emperor's immediate family, an imperial prince receives an annual stipend of 37.1m yen (£170,000) a year, and a princess half of that. All other income, from books and speeches for instance, is taxed, as are inheritances. When Prince Takamatsu died, his widow was forced to give the nation most of his estate, to keep a small part of it. The mayor of Otsu told a sad story about this. "On one occasion, when I'd given the money to one of the officers, the princess smiled at me. 'I don't have any voting rights', she told me, 'but I still have to pay inheritance tax'."

Prince Tomohito, the other race sponsor, suffers from cancer and recently came out of hospital. Unlike a commoner, he receives no social security.

In medieval Japan, some emperors were reduced to such poverty that one was forced to sell his autograph to buy food. Things are not that bad yet, but the most surprising thing about the cycle-race scandal is that Prince Takamatsu and Prince Tomohito genuinely seem to have needed the money.

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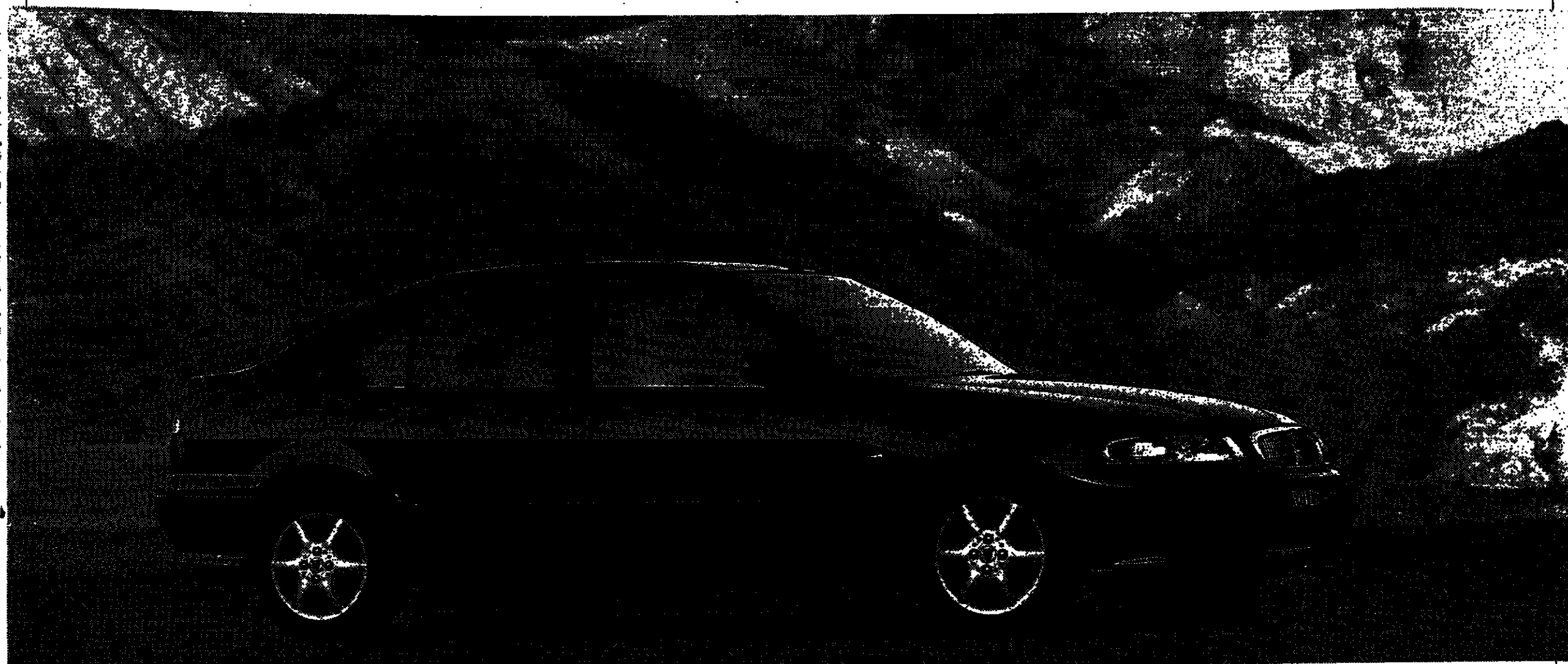
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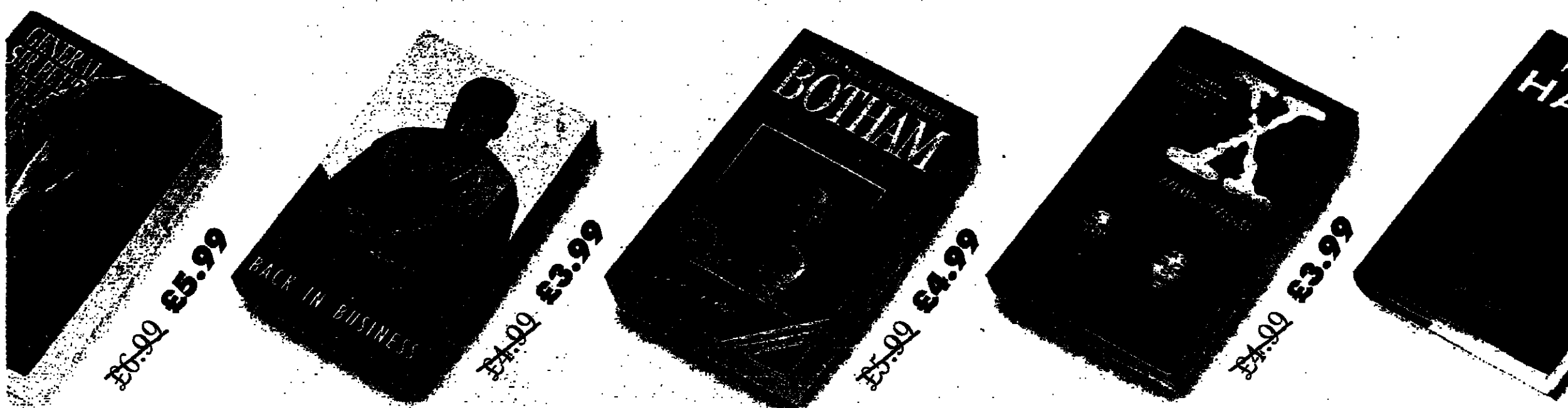


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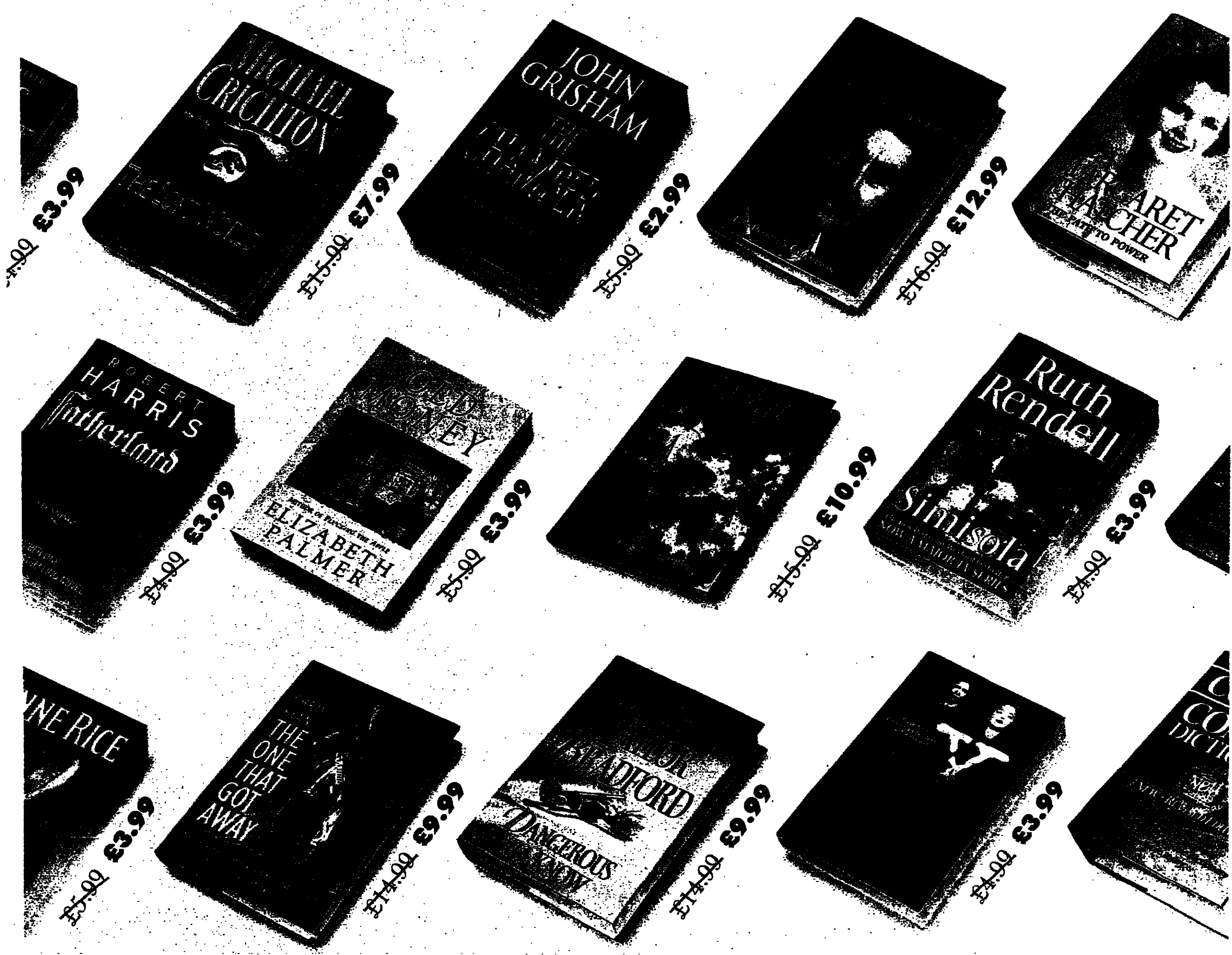
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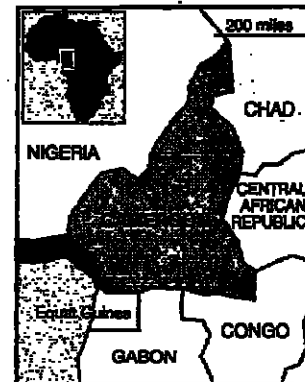
Colonial legacy may split Cameroon

REBECCA DODD

The simmering secessionist movement in the West African country of Cameroon will come to the boil tomorrow when a group representing the country's English speakers declares that at least 1.3m of the 4m population are in favour of breaking away. The Southern Cameroons National Congress wants the south of the country - formerly a British colony, unlike the North, which was ruled by France - to gain independence.

Though the SCNC claims to have strong links with the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office, it is unlikely to mobilise much international backing. But the declaration will embarrass the country's francophone government which, as it prepares to become the 52nd member of the Commonwealth, claims to have reconciled francophone-anglophone divisions. President Paul Biya is no doubt hoping that Commonwealth membership will bring respectability at home and abroad. Cameroon will be only the third Commonwealth member not once wholly governed by Britain.

The SCNC has filed its own application for Commonwealth membership on behalf of the Southern Cameroons. Its declaration will be a thorn in the side of Mr Biya when he attends the Commonwealth summit in Auckland this November. Commonwealth membership is a sign of a growing distance between France and its former colony. President Jacques Chirac left Cameroon out of his recent tour of West Africa and is said to be impatient with reports of corruption and mismanagement there.



English and French-speaking opposition groups have united to lobby the Commonwealth to reject Cameroon's application. They argue that there has been no progress on human rights and the democratisation requested as a pre-condition for Cameroon's membership at the last Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in October 1993. Specifically, they want long overdue local elections to

be held, an independent electoral commission, the lifting of pre-press censorship and constitutional reform. At present, parliament sits for only two months of the year and the president has wide powers to rule by decree. Opposition groups also fear collusion with Nigeria and a high-level government delegation is reported to have visited Nigeria with assurances that, if admitted, Cameroon would oppose sanctions against Nigeria.

French Cameroon became independent in 1960. The following year a UN plebiscite was held and the northern half of the former British Cameroons joined Nigeria while the southern half joined the former French territory. But independence calls have never quite died. The SCNC says the plebiscite was illegal and complains that while the Southern Cameroons agreed to join a re-

public of "equal status" they have since been "re-colonised" by the francophone region. The two areas have different legal and educational systems. English-speakers have long said that the government exploited their region's natural resources, in particular oil, but did little to improve living conditions. Anglophones also feel neglected by the French, who directed almost all of their post-independence aid to the francophones and whose Mafia-style business links are popularly believed to be responsible for much economic mismanagement. Moreover, the French ignored fraud at the 1992 Presidential election, because they could not bare to see an

Troops fire on E Timor rioters

Dili (AP) — Indonesian riot police and troops fired in the air and used tear gas yesterday to disperse rival gangs of youths on the third day of unrest in the capital of East Timor, which has so far left two people dead. No injuries were reported, but gangs of anti- and pro-independence youths continued to roam the streets of Dili, forming barricades with empty petrol drums, old furniture and tree branches to disrupt traffic. Sporadic gunfire was heard.

The Indonesian Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, blamed the rioting on activists working abroad for East Timorese independence, saying it was another attempt to foment trouble in the former Portuguese colony. Indonesian troops seized the territory in 1976, after Portugal pulled out, but the United Nations still recognises Portugal as the administrative power. Most Timorese are Catholic and speak Portuguese, hindering their integration into Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim nation. Most shops were closed and public transport stopped as the military responded to a call by the governor, Abilio Jose Soares, to end the unrest.

The trouble started on Tuesday, after police arrested a pro-independence activist, said a local council member, Manuel Carrascalao. Two men were stabbed to death and 18 people were injured in street fighting, Mr Carrascalao said. Five people have been arrested.

The fighting underscored the simmering tensions in East Timor, where pro-independence feeling is strong.

In Jakarta the armed forces spokesman, Brigadier-General Suwarno Adiwijoyo, said the situation in Dili would be easily controlled, and there was no reason to use excessive force.

Mr Alatas refused to comment on reports that Bishop Filipe Ximenes Belo, a critic of the government who heads the Catholic Church in East Timor, is among five nominees for this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

But he welcomed Australia's decision to deny refugee status to 18 East Timorese who landed in Darwin in May. Australia is one of the few countries which recognises Indonesia's rule over East Timor.

Crisis threatens to disrupt poll in South Africa

PRAKASH NAIDOO

Tensions in South Africa's government of national unity, and in the violence-prone province of KwaZulu-Natal, overshadowed a vote yesterday by parliament to hold historic local elections next month.

Polls to replace the last remnants of apartheid in South Africa's elected institutions have been bedevilled for months by uncertainty over voter registration and haggling over local authority boundaries. Although the National Assembly voted yesterday to go ahead on 1 November, KwaZulu-Natal will sit out the process for at least another five months.

The parliamentary debate, however, caused the worst infighting between the African National Congress and its governing partner, the National Party, since the national election 17 months ago. Mac Maharaj, the ANC Minister of Transport, called for the Deputy President and leader of the NP, FW de Klerk, to be sacked as chairman of the cabinet committee on security and intelligence, accusing him of threatening a coup while addressing a party rally last weekend.

Yesterday President Nelson Mandela's office moved to

dispel rumours, believed to have started in financial markets in London, that Mr de Klerk had resigned, although the ANC said it supported Mr Maharaj's call for his dismissal. Mr de Klerk said he had been misquoted.

Tension between the two parties has been aggravated by ANC claims that the NP was attempting to manipulate the electoral boundaries in the Western Cape, the only province controlled by the party, to improve its chances next month. Polls will go ahead except in the greater Cape Town metropolitan area, the centre of the dispute.

Voting will also be delayed in KwaZulu-Natal, the power base of Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party, which has seen the worst wrangling over boundaries.

Peter Miller, Inkatha's provincial housing minister, said yesterday that it would be impossible to go ahead with elections before 27 March next year, the deadline set in the new legislation. If KwaZulu-Natal fails to meet the deadline, the central government is empowered to appoint administrators to run the province.

Fighting between the Zulu nationalists of Inkatha and



Generation game: Nelson Mandela greeting children at the site of a planned youth centre

Photograph: Juda Ngwenya/Reuters

ANC supporters has killed scores of people in the province in recent months. This, coupled with bitter disputes over boundaries, has undermined any hope of a trouble-free election.

Inkatha, which governs KwaZulu-Natal with a small majority, has argued for a high degree of autonomy from the central government, and Chief Buthelezi is accused of seeking

the secession of the province. The party is refusing to include any tribal areas within the electoral boundaries of the cities, and the issue will now be referred to a special electoral

court, probably by early next month, for a final decision. In the rest of the country there is increasing concern that voters' rolls may not be up to date. Despite a massive voter-

education drive in the past six months, a survey this week revealed that many people still believe they can simply turn up at the polls and vote, as they did last year.

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Big-money haggling is about to change our whole sporting culture, say **Mathew Horsman** and **David Hellier**

The Sky's the limit for sport on TV

Once again British sport is about to change radically. And just like last time, television and money – lots of it – are behind the transformation. The creation of football's migration to pay-TV through the satellite broadcaster Sky, was the first revolution. It changed the country's favourite sport for ever – plunging a quarter of a billion pounds into the game, improving television coverage and helping to fund the refurbishing of stadiums throughout Britain, as well as providing a large pot to fuel escalating pay scales for star players.

The deal with Sky took top-level live football off free television, forcing the serious fan to dish out for a satellite dish and pay Sky a subscription fee. Now, as broadcasters and club owners engage in fresh talks over renewing television contracts, viewers may even have to "pay per view", match by match, as the digital era dawns.

The changes imposed on football have been gentle compared to the revolution occurring in rugby league, where the game has even had its season reinvented. An £89m deal designed to hijack the Australian Rugby League has aligned the British Rugby League with Rupert Murdoch, who owns 40 per cent of Sky, and is responsible for one of the biggest changes in the history of the game here.

From next March matches will be played in the summer in order to fit in with his proposed Australian super league, and the changes will not stop there. Mr Murdoch's News International, as the game's paymaster, will determine how, when and where it will be played.

Football is a mightier force and has been able to resist such fundamental changes – so far. But the advent of 200-channel television will test its resistance to the full.

Against the odds, Sky's relationship to date with football has been relatively sweet, and has not in the main outraged traditionalists.

A proud Sam Chisholm, chief executive of Sky and confidante of Mr Murdoch, says: "It is the most rewarding partnership we have, and the benefits that have flowed to the clubs, the fans and the viewers are enormous."

But if Sky thinks it has helped football, there is no doubting how much of a boost football has given to Sky. Without it the successful flotation of the BSkyB group last year would have been a good deal harder, if not impossible, to achieve.

"There is a growing awareness in the football industry about just how

critical football has been to Sky's success," says Roger Devlin of Henry Ansbacher, financial advisers to a number of leading football clubs. One club owner puts it more bluntly: "Let's face it, the Premier League made Sky. In retrospect, we sold our rights too cheaply and look like idiots."

Sky became Britain's most profitable television broadcaster and it is now the biggest producer of sports programming, spending £100m a year compared to the BBC's £94m and ITV's £40m. It dominates virtually all senior football – to such an extent, indeed, that frustrated

By 2000, viewers are likely to have a huge choice. One thing is clear – the fans will be expected to pay

competitors complain about the Murdoch monopoly: "It almost defies logic that anyone can compete with him."

The move from "free" to pay had other consequences. Where once as many as 12 million people would watch the highlights of a game on ITV or BBC, a Premier League match on Sky might get an audience of 2 million. But the coverage itself is massively improved, as even Sky's harshest critics concede and since Sky started showing football live attendances have gone up.

The last Sky deal, though, left the rest of the Football League hanging, stuck with a relatively paltry deal

with ITV and with no share in the fortunes showered on the breakaway top clubs.

All that looks set to change, and the implications not only for football but for all televised sports are huge. For the next generation of sports rights will take us into the era of digital television and the prospect of wall-to-wall sporting events.

Even more money will be thrown at sports on TV – perhaps £800m over five years for the Premier League alone. The rump of the Football League, the First, Second and Third divisions, stand to gain more than £120m in that period, with the FA Cup and international matches generating perhaps £130m. Cricket rights might fetch £5m when the current contract is renewed, while a host of secondary rights (for replays, highlights and the likes) could sweeten the sports pot further.

Just how many events will be available to the average viewer is unknown. But one thing is clear: the fan will have to pay for the extra choice.

It is pay-TV that has driven prices to these dizzy heights: the whole point for Sky is buy exclusive rights, obliging viewers to ante up for the privilege of watching. By 2000, viewers are likely to have a huge choice. But they will be expected to pay, either for subscriptions to satellite and cable, or even for smart cards to plug into set-top boxes, giving them home and away games of their favourite teams on digital television.

Football has already shown the way and rugby is not far behind. Only the few events listed by the Broadcasting Act, including the FA Cup and Wimbledon, will be safe from pay-per-view, although there is nothing stopping satellite or cable broadcasters snapping up the rights

to these hallowed events as well.

The first outlines of the future of televised sports are discernible in tense talks now under way to renew the contracts for football. The landmark Premier deal, worth £218m over five years for the top 20 clubs, expires at the end of next season, and the broadcasters and football owners are jockeying for position.

At the same time, contracts for the rights to cup finals and internationals, along with the Endsleigh (non-Premier) League, are also under negotiation. It is a messy, complicated business. The whole concept of rights in the UK is embryonic, with broadcasters traditionally calling the shots and sports organisations accepting their wishes. Sky helped to change that, by showing just how much money was available. Club owners, the Football Association, the Rugby League and other rights holders have responded by becoming more creative – working together to package rights, for example, or pushing for elaborate profit-sharing arrangements with broadcasters.

Most advanced are the talks between all three main broadcasters and the Football Association, whose commercial director, Trevor Phillips, has put together a draft proposal combining the FA's own rights – FA Cup and international matches – with the Football League. He has secured promises of £250m over five years from Sky, of which the Foot-

ball League would receive £133m. As part of the agreement, both the BBC and ITV would "sub-let" rights from Sky, and at least some Football League games would be shown on terrestrial television. Sky would inaugurate Friday night football, featuring matches from the Football League. The deal, put yesterday to Football League club owners, must be approved within 14 days, insists Mr Phillips.

The Premier League, meanwhile, is making its own pitch to the Football League owners, hoping to entice them into joining forces and securing an even better deal from the broadcasters. David Dein, vice-chairman of Arsenal, says his objective is to "maximise revenues for the game. I, for one, do not believe football should be getting its rights cut right. We should have a dialogue with all the main players in football."

If that approach fails, the top 20 teams will again sit down with Sky, and hammer out a renewal of their current deal.

Other potential bidders may be lurking on the sidelines. Companies such as IMG, the sports agency, and media companies Pearson and Mirror Group, are all believed to be

considering joining rival consortia to wrest the Premier League away from Sky.

Whoever wins – and Sky must be the favourite – traditionalists may still have cause to worry. If pay-per-view becomes the norm, the British game is bound to change. With virtually every game on tap, and no need to travel to the local stadium, let alone out of town, can the culture of British football survive? The fears that preceded the first Sky deal – saturation television coverage, half-empty grounds and growing inequality between mega-clubs and bankrupt also-rans – may well surface.

Additional reporting by Dave Hadfield.

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Listed events
Under the 1990 Broadcasting Act, viewers receiving cable or satellite TV should not pay an additional fee for "listed events". Nothing prevents listed events being exclusively shown on satellite/cable channels: each sporting organisation decides on its own TV contracts. Rugby Union and Wimbledon have so far decided to stay with terrestrial television to reach a larger audience. Rugby League however, because of underfunding, has negotiated a deal with Sky.

Listed events are:
Cricket: England's test matches
Racing: the Derby, Grand National
Football: FIFA World Cup finals, FA Cup final, Scottish FA Cup final
Tennis: finals weekend of Wimbledon
Olympic Games

The Commonwealth Games and the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race were initially considered but finally removed from the list.

Value of broadcast rights to football

By 2000, viewers are likely to have a huge choice. One thing is clear – the fans will be expected to pay

Witkes's

Kremlinologists in the Conservative Party bunker tell me it was no accident that Baroness Thatcher (Happy Birthday, my dear) found herself beside the Prime Minister for Ken Clarke's speech to the party conference yesterday. Witkes finds it hard to believe, but it was the first time on record that the Prime Minister and his predecessor have sat together on the platform.

It was carefully stage-managed by that wily Ulster matchmaker Brian Mawhinney, the party chairman, to emphasise continuity and unity. Lady Thatcher sat on Mr Major's right, while Ken Clarke, Margaret's Brutus, sat on his left. All that was needed to complete the happy picture was Sir Edward Heath. But the canny old buffer understandably thought better of making up the numbers.

He was already safely back in the comfort of Cathedral Close, Salisbury.

Of course, as Father of the House, my redoubtable friend Sir Edward has no need to adjust his sails either for the Prime Minister or today's birthday girl. Indeed, it is not lost on Sir Edward that the death of Lord Home gives him even more gravitas. He is now the senior former prime minister, putting one over on Baroness Thatcher.

And he will not be sorry to miss John Major's keynote speech today in Blackpool. Sir Edward has little stomach for the Nuremberg rallies in the Conservative Party conference hall, having witnessed Hitler address the real thing. After the event, the young pro-European Heath was introduced at a reception to some of the German party leaders, including Homben. "He had a very watery handshake," Sir Edward remembered. Witkes observed it was like John Gummer's. "I have never shaken John Gummer's hand," said the former prime minister.

In the rush for safe Tory seats did Tim Collins, former Central Office



Has one met somewhere before?

director of communications and briefly Downing Street political adviser, jump too soon in securing the plum and deeply beautiful Westmorland and Lonsdale? The constituency is one of the most beautiful in the country, but far away from Westminster. Sad for poor Mr Collins, he headed to distant parts before the frequently untroubled transport minister Steven Norris announced that he would stand down from his Epping Forest stronghold, no doubt to spend more time with his secondhand cars. The constituency association chairman is none other than Di Collins, mother of Tim.

Witkes has an idea for the Millennium Fund. Never mind spending it on refurbishing village halls. It should be used to create a permanent audiovisual exhibition of Michael Heseltine's past conference speeches. During his performance this week Witkes was suddenly impressed by the thought that he was witnessing the end of an era for a politician aptly dubbed Widow Twanky. Hezza in full

flow is as remarkable as the Niagara Falls and ought to be preserved for the nation.

This conference is not like 1986, when the Tories turned the tide. There is a whiff of decay about. A team of Labour Party activists is going to try to get the message across to the Cabinet this morning with a 40ft-high quotation from the Blair speech, all about the Tories wrapping themselves in the flag while destroying the fabric of society. It will be written in the sand outside the main conference hotel on the Blackpool Prom. It is to be hoped they have studied their tide tables correctly. Otherwise, it could be a wash out.

Michael Dobbs, the former Tory vice chairman, has done it again. His *House of Cards*, about a prime minister ousted in a party leadership election, was turned into a BBC drama on the eve of the fall of Margaret Thatcher. Next month (starting on bonfire night), the BBC starts his serialisation of his *The Final Cut*. Mr Dobbs's powers of prediction are undimmed. *The Final Cut* features a character called Tom Malaplace, who crosses the floor of the House, unable to stay in the same party as the cynical, manipulative Francis Urquhart. Come to think of it, Alan Howarth does look a little like a bit-part actor in a TV drama.

The tough-talking Hezza clearly has a disciple in the diminutive but



Just not the closet type

sturdy figure of Gillian Shephard. For the first time in her life, Mrs Shephard objected to the size of her hotel room, and effected a swift change to something a little larger than a broom cupboard at the Imperial Hotel. At last, Gillian is showing real signs of leadership tendencies.

Sir George Young travelled to Blackpool by train on Monday, and was asked by a customer services operative to fill out a questionnaire about the Poole to Edinburgh cross-country service. Under "occupation", he dutifully wrote out "Secretary of State for Transport". The next question was: "To whom do you report?" Sir George was going to put "The Queen", but then consulted his political advisers. After discussion, he wrote "The Prime Minister". No doubt the InterCity employee who received the form muttered to him or herself, "Another matter", and filed it in the bin.

Like most right-thinking people with medals in his top drawer, Witkes's normally robust stomach was left uneasy by Michael Portillo's performance, in which he verbally dined the sandy beret of the SAS. His macho performance has been the subject of much ribald comment among the drinking classes at Jeffrey Archer's splendid parties. One young Turk in the Tory high command told Witkes it was "exploitation with military hardware".

It was all too much for one old soldier in the Tory high command, who said the Defence Secretary had faked his chance to serve his country by refusing to join a military cadet corps when he was a youth. Witkes believes Mr Portillo's lack of a military record may come to haunt the young pretender. He will never be a Major.

Ken Livingstone, who is doing a film for LWT, doctored Mr Portillo with a film crew as the Defence Secretary arrived at the Savoy Hotel, Blackpool, to address the annual dinner of the Thatcherite Conservative Way Forward group. "I've been exchanged for Alan Howarth," said Ken brightly. Mr Portillo was not amused.

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The voters aren't daft, Mr Howard

Michael Howard in crime-fighting' guy mode resembles nothing so much as an American police chief up for re-election. His speech to the Tory faithful yesterday claimed much "we are taking our country back from the criminals" and promised more. Despite all the other possible claims on the Government's time – and despite the fairly recent introduction of the Criminal Justice Act – the Home Secretary committed himself to a new Crime Bill to be introduced in the relatively short time between now and the next general election.

No one could accuse Chief Howard of subtlety – his timetable is almost painfully political. He plans to embarrass Labour by bringing forward measures that Jack Straw and his colleagues are bound either to oppose for their illiberality or that will divide them. Mr Howard knows full well that Labour believes (along with almost all the experts and the students of crime prevention) that longer and more mandatory sentences cause as many problems as they solve. And he judges that large sections of Middle Britain do not see it that way. The bill is just waiting to be exploited.

Howard's way is clear. He will legislate for mandatory life sentences for second-time violent and sexual offenders and introduce stiffer minimum sentences for burglars and drug dealers. This, he argues, is what being tough on crime means. Those who oppose are therefore soft on crime.

Yet even as he basked in the inevitable ovation, Mr Howard knew one of these opponents was likely to be the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Taylor. Only a week ago the

two had a meeting in which Lord Taylor delivered his own strong preference for retaining the maximum discretion in sentencing. He argued that the problem in deterring crime lay in low rates of detection, not in short sentences.

Mr Howard is entitled to disagree with the views of the judiciary. He could have argued that they were ignoring this key fact, or overlooking that bit of evidence. But he didn't. Instead he spoke as though the argument had never been made. He simply ignored the Lord Chief Justice.

And just as Michael Portillo had earlier managed to offend the services by his crass invocation of the SAS and the British fighting man, so Mr Howard brought the wrath of another institution – the judiciary – down around his ears. For Lord Taylor is a man of our times, prepared (unlike his predecessors) to enter the public lists where he sees the need. His intervention was momentous. He dismissed the idea that the threat of longer sentences deters habitual criminals. "What deters them is the likelihood of being caught, which at the moment," he added scathingly, "is small." "Does anyone believe," he went on, "that a professional burglar, who knows he has at most only three chances in 20 of being caught, will be deterred by the addition of six months to his sentence?"

Michael Howard has calculated that the answer to Lord Taylor's question is yes. We are not so sure. Underestimating the electorate's intelligence is a game politicians play at their peril. Especially when someone as persuasive as Lord Taylor is around to put the record straight.

Stand firm against tax cuts

As Chancellor goes, Kenneth Clarke has been a good one. So far. In difficult political times he has held his nerve and stuck to a strategy to restrain inflation and deliver sustainable growth. But yesterday's speech suggests that he may be about to risk his reputation in pursuit of short-term political gain.

Paradoxically, the absence of a feel-good factor has helped the economy to grow without inflation taking off. A static housing market, combined with hefty tax increases, have kept consumer spending subdued.

However, yesterday's unexpected jump in the underlying inflation figures, from 2.9 per cent to 3.1 per cent, shows the continuing fragility of our current non-inflationary growth. And given the risk that higher inflationary expectations may feed through to future wage rises and price rises, the Chancellor needs to proceed with caution, both on taxes and on interest rates.

However, such caution is not an attractive counsel when you are drifting to electoral defeat. The party craves a tax cut here, an interest rate cut there, and a boost for the housing market thrown in for good measure.

Mr Clarke should stand firm and not deliver. An interest rate cut when inflation is moving upwards faster than expected would be too risky. A tax cut funded by borrowing would only add to the inflationary pressures. A package for the housing market would also distort the fiscal regime and make it harder to deliver worthwhile reductions in the tax burden when they can be afforded.

The Chancellor's big problem is that growth is running slightly lower than expected, so there is no bonus from higher tax receipts – or lower spending on unemployment – to redistribute. That, of course, leaves a tax cut funded by spending cuts as Mr Clarke's only way forward.

Yet no one who heard him yesterday can doubt that he intends to unveil what he will call a tax-cutting Budget next month. By that he may well mean the sort of tax cuts we have had in the past 15 years – namely, not tax cuts at all but a re-juggling of the tax burden.

It is an entirely legitimate aim of a Tory government to pursue a genuinely lower overall tax take – something like the 35 per cent we had in the Sixties, rather than the 40 per cent-plus of the Eighties and Nineties. But this, even if desirable, could not be achieved by sleight of hand: it is only possible if the state's expenditure is radically recast, perhaps along the lines that were suggested this week by Norman Lamont.

Mr Clarke has never been this kind of radical. He cares too much about the NHS and the social security system. Which leaves only unsustainable tax cuts and gimmicks.

His likeliest budget trick is to promise a programme of falling taxes stretching over several years – to be funded by future and implausible spending cuts. This might be smart politics in that it would help interrogate Labour's hazy thinking on tax. But make no mistake, it would be a gimmick. We will probably be lucky if we get through the election with no folly greater than this.

ANOTHER VIEW Pam Ayres

Permit me my wrinkles

Well, I am all for it – clear and effective speech. I am not talking about the cut-glass stuff, the plump in the mouth, the brow-hair have a devil on horseback Claude. I mean people who know the words and use them correctly and can see how each sentence is going to finish before they start it. So when I read yesterday that Gillian Shephard desires all our children to leave school speaking clearly and effectively in standard English, my first thought was, "Good on you!"

The thing that bothers me is the possibility that, by promoting only standard English, the other rich types of English usage are left to fossilise.

I know Mrs Shephard says she is not referring to regional accents, but I wonder how successfully the two matters can be separated. What is it, anyway, this standard English? What does it outlaw? While I think any damage inflicted on regional speech patterns by Shephard will be secondary to the blows already dealt it by a mobile population and a television in every living room, nevertheless regional dialects must be threatened further by the adoption of standard English. Does that matter? I believe it does.

Take one of my first boyfriends. He was a Geordie. For me, fresh from Stanford in the Vale, Berkshire, listening to him was like listening to a foreign language. I doubt that what he said to me was structured in standard English, but it was beautiful just the same.

Take my old uncle who lived in a little

isolated village near Uffington. He never said he was going to the toilet. He said he was going up the dyke. Dyke. Natural watercourse. Ditch. The language takes you back and informs you what people did pre-privy. My mum never used to say she was going to have a look; she went to have a "kite round". It is from the wheezing bird of prey and is a centuries-old usage. In a Cornish village recently, a man was standing in his garden and I asked him where a friend of mine might live. The man looked up brightly. "Know ee, do ee?" he said. What happens to people who say: "Know ee, do ee?" Mrs Shephard?

Don't misunderstand me. I am not campaigning for regional accents to be preserved in aspic. I have had one for a lifetime and I am not sure I would wish it on a dog. Mention me and people shut one eye and shout, "Ooh art!" I write comic verse. Well over two million books sold and my current one is in its fourteenth reprint. Yet I hardly ever see a reference to myself in the press without some put-down relating to my voice. Make way for the Bucolic Bard, the Rustic Rhymster, the Shakespeare of the Shires. It is irritating after 20 years. But, Mrs Shephard, despite all my years of fighting "voicism", I would not want all the wrinkles ironed out of our language. Medea-o-o.

The author is a writer and entertainer. Her latest book is *The Works*, BBC Books, £4.99.



'I'm not nickin' anythin'! Just warn Howard to lay off!'

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Michael Portillo's virtual reality leaves no room for the facts

From Mr A. L. Teasdale
Sir: Am I alone in having difficulty in recognising various statements in Michael Portillo's speech to the Conservative Party conference as accurate or real?

For example, the Defence Secretary says that qualified majority voting (QMV) will never be extended to foreign policy in Europe so long as the Conservatives are in power. Why, then, did John Major agree at Maastricht that QMV can be used for "implementing measures" in the foreign policy field?

Mr Portillo says Britain will not join a "single European army" under the Conservatives. Has he not read the interim report of the so-called Reflection Group preparing next year's Intergovernmental Conference (IGC)? This recently accepts that "national sovereignty remains the basic point of reference" in defence, where "consensus has to be the rule". Where is the threat from Brussels here?

Mr Portillo says Britain could never "merge our defence co-operation into the EU" under the Conservatives. Perhaps not, but it is not this Government which has proposed that the Western European Union (WEU) should hold defence summits dovetailing with those of the EU? And was it not Mr Major who agreed at Maastricht that the WEU

should develop "as the defence component of the EU"?

At Blackpool, Mr Portillo and others reportedly denounced concepts such as "ever-closer union" and continued European "integration". The first commitment is set down in the opening lines of the Rome and Maastricht treaties. The second concept was endorsed by the Government as recently as last month, when David Davis, Foreign Office Minister for Europe, was among those to "unanimously emphasise the need to continue and strengthen European integration", as reported in the IGC Reflection Group's interim report.

The virtual reality politics of Mr Portillo has no place for these facts. Just as he systematically accuses opponents in other parties of policies they do not support, so he forces pro-Europeans within the Conservative Party to conclude that his real agenda is, through wilful misrepresentation, to make Britain's continued membership of the EU unworkable.

Yours faithfully,
ANTHONY TEASDALE
London, SW3
11 October

From Mr Simon Berger
Sir: I beg to disagree with your editorial criticism of Michael Portillo's speech ("Michael Portillo's shabby patriotism", 11 October). Although I am not a fan of the man or his right-wing views, there is merit in the view that we must not compromise the UK's independence to act as it sees fit in overseas matters, whether in co-operation with Europe, the United States or others.

I share Mr Portillo's view that closer integration of our foreign and defence policies into the European Union will only result in more vacillation and shameful compromise, not less.

We must be at liberty to pursue our own national spirit and moral identity, which may not coincide with those of our European partners. I am sceptical that an integrated EU policy in Bosnia would have produced better results than those limited prospects we see today.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID RICKARD
Riccald, North Yorkshire

From Mr Neil Calder
Sir: Around the world, the three letters SAS are immediately recognised as the acronym for Scandinavian Airlines and not, as Michael Portillo clearly assumes, our Special Air Service. Non-Brits must be wondering why a most congenial airline should "send a chill down the spine of the enemy". Which enemy, by the way?

Yours faithfully,
NEIL CALDER
Eccorans, Ains
France
11 October

From Mr Peter Neill
Sir: Who now dares to put clear blue water between the Conservative Party and the National Front?

Yours faithfully,
PETER NEILL
Woking, Surrey
11 October

From Mr Peter Calvocoressi
Sir: I remember speeches like Mr Portillo's and their rapturous reception in the Thirties. But not in Britain.

Yours faithfully,
PETER CALVOCORESSI
Bath
11 October

From Mr David Rickard
Sir: May I say that I have the greatest respect for the SAS, and I resent its name being used for cheap political gains. In Michael Portillo's case, those letters spell out one clear message: Silly At [the] Seaside.

Yours sincerely,
DAVID RICKARD
Riccald, North Yorkshire

From Mr M. C. Kennedy
Sir: It is about time we had a truly independent view of the public finances. Gavyn Davies ("A mountain of reasons to reduce the public debt", 9 October) likes to keep up with the latest academic papers – Ricardian equivalence and all that! But these, unfortunately, can spell disaster for the policy-maker who takes them seriously.

The interest-raising effects of public deficits can, are, and almost always have been corrected by accommodating monetary policy. The small rise in real interest rates since the 1960s is not due to higher public debt, but to tighter monetary policy in reaction to the inflation of the 1970s. Nice as it would be to have a national debt at all, the consequences of reducing it – whether to enhance a politician's reputation or to meet the Maastricht guidelines – are bound to deflate national income and employment.

Yours faithfully,
M. C. KENNEDY
School of Economic Studies
University of Manchester
Manchester
11 October

From Mr Rupert Lee
Sir: In answer to Clive Exton (letter, 30 September), it is worth pointing out that among the ranks of our recognised top artists women are very much in the minority, so it may not be surprising that none of the *Independent's* "40 women under 40" is an artist.

A reason for this lack of female artists is suggested by Gloria Moss's article "One man's neat design is a woman's turn-off" (7 August). Apparently, men and women have subtly different aesthetic tastes, and tend unconsciously to prefer works of art by members of their own sex.

If this is true, it explains why the higher echelons of the art

world remain in the hands of a self-perpetuating male clique. The "arbiters of taste" – art critics, art gallery proprietors and dealers – are predominantly male, so without being in any way consciously sexist they tend to prefer and promote the works of male artists. As a result, the most famous works of fine art attract mainly male admirers, so the next generation of art critics, etc., are again male...

Only the occasional Dame Barbara Hepworth manages to challenge the hegemony. The innumerable Dora Carringtons of this world, lacking any serious encouragement, are fated to remain a few rungs further down the ladder.

Yours faithfully,
RUPERT LEE
London, SW14
2 October

From Mr Stephen Jakobi
Sir: I have read the articles by Robert Fisk [about judicial punishments in the Gulf states] with horror but some of the correspondence that has followed (Letters, 11 October) appears to me to be at variance with the facts.

Gavin Sheppard Smith was flogged in secret by rclays of police officers on 3 May 1994. Buried in the transcript of the Qatar court that ordered his flogging is the following curious judicial comment:

"reprimand offences under religious jurisprudence are not required to be proven in the same way as the crimes that require the imposition of penalties and reprisals."

Religious courts in Qatar and, one suspects, elsewhere in the Moslem world, are therefore not required to conform to the requirements of the state criminal law.

The last religious courts in Europe that had power to order imprisonment and beatings without regard to state laws was the Spanish Inquisition over 150 years ago. The learned arguments on Sharia law are surely beside the point in circumstances such as these.

Yours faithfully,
STEPHEN JAKOBI
Fair Trials Abroad Trust
Richmond, Surrey
11 October

From Professor J. R. Pole
Sir: The Ambassador of Saudi Arabia (Another View, 10 October) and other members of the Muslim religion who have expressed their satisfaction at living under its laws, are all members of the male sex. It is, unfortunately, a little late to ask whether the decapitated female victims of these laws shared their satisfaction.

Yours faithfully,
J. R. POLE
Oxford
11 October

Letters should be addressed to Letters to the Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL, and include a daytime telephone number. (Fax: 0171-293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk). Letters may be edited for length.

Democracy and Saudi law

From Sir James Craig
Sir: I was abroad when you published Robert Fisk's article about the beheadings in Saudi Arabia ("Secret Saudi executions shame the West", 9 October). So I hope you will allow this belated comment.

I am deeply opposed to capital punishment, and even more opposed to public beheadings. But what does the word "secret" mean in your headline and in Mr Fisk's phrase "the majority of the executions were kept secret from all but spectators"? Nothing could be less secret than that.

The Saudis have a legal system which, as criminals know, prescribes execution for certain offences. The system would not change if Saudi Arabia had the democracy that Mr Fisk advocates. It is what the people want. It would be our system too if (heaven forbid) public opinion had its way.

Yours faithfully,
JAMES CRAIG
London, SW1
12 October

The writer was Ambassador to Saudi Arabia (1979-84).

From Mr Stephen Jakobi
Sir: I have read the articles by Robert Fisk [about judicial punishments in the Gulf states] with horror but some of the correspondence that has followed (Letters, 11 October) appears to me to be at variance with the facts.

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No

NEW WATER

THE WRITER

THE WRITER

THE WRITER

THE WRITER

comment

Of courtesy and Chinese orphans

Replying dutifully to letters is not worthwhile, especially where campaigners are concerned

Answering mail has always seemed to me a sacred duty and, although I have not always managed it, I have spent many thousands of hours and pounds struggling to cope with all kinds of missives, flattering, frightening, foolish or friendly. Now the worm is on the turn. I am steeling myself to bin without mercy, because answering letters is a courtesy too far in a world without scruple. A case in point is my correspondence with the Dying Rooms Trust.

If, as I did, you fingered abed long enough to catch the last hour of GMTV on Wednesday, you will have seen a handsome young English couple with a bonny Chinese baby girl. They told how they had been so moved by *The Dying Rooms* documentary shown on Channel 4 in June that they had given up their place high on the list for adoption of an English-born child and shelved out £10,000 on a trip to China. They seemed not in the least cross that when they got there they didn't have the thrill of rescuing an infant from the brink of death but collected a well-cared-for child from a well-run institution. Of all the overseas adoption stories I have ever heard, this one was startlingly light on official obstructionism, deliberate stalling and delay and attempts at extortion. And never a mention of the Dying Rooms Trust.

The Dying Rooms Trust was set up in the immediate aftermath of the emotional shock caused to this caring nation by the documentary. Its stated aim was to "tackle the greatest ongoing tragedy the world has ever seen, namely the institutionalised cruelty and even murder of around 1 million

abandoned children a year in China". According to its publicity, "the mortality rate in China's filthy, overcrowded orphanages is a horrifying 79 per cent." Clearly the young English couple went to a different China. A trustee of the Dying Rooms Trust wrote to me in August asking for my support in raising funds (how else?) and informing me triumphantly that the trust was to be the beneficiary of the autumn appeal in the new series of *Anne and Nick*.

One of the most baffling attributes of the English is their tendency to believe that they would make far better parents of other people's offspring than they do of their own. Clearly after charity begs us to save the children. (And this in a country where fathers spend less than five minutes a week in close contact with their children.) I greatly distrust our interest in other people's progeny and I distrust it even more in the context of the criminalisation of a quarter of the world's population. In China gaily dressed children are to be seen everywhere, perched on the handlebars of their fathers' bikes, snoozing on their mothers' backs, being held over the gutter to pee, always in close contact and communication with adults. The Chinese don't dub children adorable and then ignore them; they actually enjoy their company. To swap a child-centred culture for one that prefers the company of dogs seems to me no bargain. So I thought hard about the trust's letter for two weeks and answered it at length. I argued that, if you really believe that the situation portrayed in the documentary pre-



GERMAINE GREER

All those demands for my favourite recipe, poem, book - into my big new shiny black bin

ails all over China and is the result of official policy, the solution is not to export a handful of children to an alien culture but to put pressure on the Chinese government. To exploit such a lamentable situation as a way of completing British families strikes me as wrong from every point of view.

It would be extraordinary if serious inadequacies in child-care institutions could not be found within a peasant nation of a billion people. It would be equally extraordinary if the Chinese authorities had been delighted that foreigners had found them. What response could Chinese television producers expect to a request for permission to make a documentary on child abuse in English institutions? Would the Chinese have reason to argue that such abuse is institutionalised and condoned and universal? It certainly takes us a helluva long time to get around to doing it.

The orphanages full of girl children are the result of the widespread implementation in China of the draconian one-child policy, which has only now begun to be condemned and that palely, because we want fewer Chinese even more passionately than the Chinese do. In 1984 I wrote in a largely misunderstood book called *Sex and Destiny* that "We do not wish to hear that Chinese policy is brutal because we need to feel secure in the certainty that we do not need to oppose it. Our support of drastic policies soils us by association and coarsens our understanding of what is meant by democracy." It is too late now to suggest that we could remedy the situation by adopting a few hundred unwanted girl babies. The Chinese have proved that they can perform miracles; the work of eradicating the historic preference for boy children will be done by the Chinese, if it is done at all.

Clearly, I shouldn't have bothered to explain my misgivings about the Dying Rooms Trust in a letter to Diana Holmes. My reward for this courtesy was to be pilloried as a "maverick" in an inexorably sensationalist double-page spread in the *London Evening Standard*, featuring an appalling picture of a naked, emaciated child at the point of death. If, as most of those approached by the trust probably did, I had binned the original letter and held my peace, I'd have saved time, energy, money and wear and tear upon the soul.

The tendency to exploit private correspondence for newspaper coverage is not limited to the harder edge of fund-raising. The average

punter has realised that a letter from a celebrity is money in the bank. A few weeks ago I had a letter from a disabled man who had written a novel, which he wanted me to help him to get published. I read the terrible stuff he sent, and answered him at once in the person of my assistant: "Dr Greer has asked me to return your print-out with her apologies. Any endorsement that Dr Greer would offer would have to imply that she considers your work to be of outstanding quality. She is sorry to have to say that in her honest opinion this is not the case. This is not by any means to say that it is unpublishable."

Even publishers don't return unsolicited manuscripts. From now on, I won't either. Then I won't get the letter telling me that the man is dead, and my "harsh and unkind words" the last letter he got and destined to be, with "all reactions from the 100 famous people he approached for help, published in the newspapers".

That settles it. Bin, bin, bin. All those demands for funds to put deserving people through drama, law or art school, bin. All those befuddled requests to explain what fuck-me shoes are, bin. All those 20-page hand-written screeds explaining the meaning of life, bin. All those reproaches for things I didn't say, bin, glorious bin. All those demands for my favourite poem, recipe, book, colour, into my big new shiny black garbage bin. No more filing and cross-referencing. I will save only the stamps for the hospital. No more queuing in the spectacularly inefficient post office. Calloo calloo!

Thatcher: the final challenge

It's Margaret Thatcher's birthday today. The best birthday present anyone could give her would be the leadership of the Tory party. She always wanted to be still leading the Tory party at the age of 70. In fact, she had already written the speech she would deliver to celebrate the occasion. Here it is, copied from her actual notes, as they are to be found on show in the Margaret Thatcher Foundation Travelling Exhibition:

Man says: "Pray silence for Margaret Thatcher!" I stand up. I quell the conference hall with a glance. I say: "My Lords, ladies and gentlemen..."

There is a gigantic ovation. I let it run for a minute or two then quell it with another glance. I glance at my notes, and then ostentatiously throw them away. I speak as follows, from another set of notes which have already been left on the lectern for this very purpose...

"My Lords, ladies and gentlemen, I have now been leader of this great party for 20 years, and more. During that time we have seen it grow from an opposition party to a party in power, of power and with power! Wait for round of applause here, even though the mellifluous phrase means nothing. Sheep, the lot of them."

"During that time I have built the party into a monument to solidarity, loyalty and cohesion. Whatever we have wanted to do we have done. People said we could not regain the Falkland Islands. We did it! People said we could never tame the trade unions. We succeeded! They said we could never introduce a national lottery. They backed the wrong horse!"

Cheers and laughter here. If enough, maybe venture a joke along the lines of: "They said we could never do without Norman Tebbit. Norman who?" More cheers and laughter.

"During the time I have been at the helm of this great party of ours I have been accused of being anti-European. Nothing could be further from the truth. Why, single-handedly I have often had to keep the Mark II off by myself..."

Puzzled silence here. "I refer of course to my son, Mark." Chorus of delighted laughter.

"But there comes a time when even the most dedicated leader has to ask herself whether she has not fulfilled her task. After 20 years at the top, are there any challenges left? Would I not be happier if I simply left Westminster for a life of bucolic happiness?"

Horrid silence here. NB. Must look up meaning of bucolic.

"The straight answer to that is - No! I would be miserable! I need more challenges, not fewer! Ask any leader of a

grand enterprise how he feels when he has got that enterprise up and running, when he has ironed out the bumps and risks, when he is sailing at 70mph down the motorway of life. I will tell you how he feels. Bored!"

Uneasy silence. "Therefore it is at this time that the leader takes up another challenge. He looks round for some other organisation that needs his or her input. He looks for some other body that is waiting for a kick-start so that he can start once again to fulfil his destiny as a leader."

You could hear a pin drop. "Ladies and gentlemen, I have been looking round for such a challenge. I believe I have found it."

Slight pause to allow TV cameras to zoom in and refocus. "Now, if I were ever to leave the Tory party, I know two things would happen. The first would be a spontaneous outbreak of grief conveying the message that I could never be



MILES KINGSTON

replaced. The second would be a stampede of Tory MPs attempting to replace me."

Laughter. "But it is true! The Tory party is stuffed full of people who think they will be or still can be the leader. We have nothing but potential leaders in our party. The only reason a Tory MP ever resigns is because he has finally realised he will never be PM. If I were to leave, you would not be short of people who were better qualified than me."

"It is different in the Labour Party. The Labour Party distrusts leaders. It has always distrusted leaders, whether its own leaders or the leaders in the *Guardian* newspaper." Pause here to let joke sink in.

"In fact, the Labour Party would rather attack its own leader than the Tory leader. And given the calibre of Labour leaders in our lifetime, I am not surprised. And yet... and yet..."

An ominous silence. "It is often said that Labour needs an experienced leader. It is very often said that Labour will win the next election. This is a very great challenge for Labour. It is also a very great challenge for me. Because I have come before you today to inform you that I intend to leave the Conservatives and join the Labour Party!"

Hubbub, uproar and sensation. See daily press for further developments.

What is this conference madness that turns intelligent people into frothing cartoon characters?

No more seaside slapstick

ANDREW MARR
Columnist of the Year

There is poison in the air, some kind of intellectual pollution. Subtle British people are behaving like morons. I had been going to write a nice conventional piece about Michael Howard, or immigration, or something. But after three weeks of political conferences, their effect on the men and women I know is too disorientating, just too interesting, to be avoided.

The scene is a party, or a hotel room or a government office. In it, a clever, self-aware man is talking about the world, juggling pluses and minuses, arguing about the public good. This man is - well, Michael Portillo actually. Or Michael Howard. Or Peter Lilley. Or Michael Heseltine. Or almost any of them. Good conversations, real dilemmas.

Then they get up at a conference podium and become barely recognisable caricatures of themselves. Portillo is so offensive about Europe and the SAS that the Foreign Office has to placate continental governments and other ministers pretend not to have heard his speech so as to avoid saying anything about it. His reputation in Whitehall is rising; he has admirers across the political spectrum. But once a year he gets up at the conference and does his best to destroy it.

He is the most striking recent example, but they are all touched by the same disease. For 51 weeks a year, Lilley is a considerable thinker on social security issues, unperturbed and thoughtful. But take him to the seaside in October and he descends to gimmickry and jeers. Michael Howard works like a demon to disguise any hint of openness. Home Office policy is driven, it seems, by an insatiable appetite for tabloid-headline answers to things we all know are not so easy. The needs of conference come first, and lead to proposals attacked by the Lord Chief Justice as unjust.

Lord Chief Justice can be wrong. But crime has plagued us during the Conservative years. Home secretaries have told Tory conferences, year after year, that they have found the answer, and have failed, year after year, to deliver it. Neither the liberals nor the



Showtime: take them to the seaside in October and they descend into gimmickry and jeers

authoritarians have been convincing. You might have thought there would be some reflection of this history, even an explanation about why Howard rejected the separation-of-powers argument? Not a bit of it. This was written for instant applause, not for analysis.

As conference speeches are judged, Michael Heseltine's, like Michael Howard's, was undoubtedly a triumph. What do we mean by this? Again, not that he made us think, but that he succeeded in collapsing this subtle, fascinating country of ours into a Day-Glo cartoon for half an hour. He jumped about, stabbed the air, belted headlines, fired cheap shots into the nation's living rooms. Yes, very good. A "triumph", no doubt. He said true things. But I cannot have been alone in finding the spectacle of a man of his age and intelligence doing pantomime a little demeaning.

All these people come to Blackpool, it seems, bent on persuading the country that they are worse, cruder, sillier than they really are. Why, please? Who is meant to benefit from this?

Each day here we have walked through streets filled with poor people on holiday, people dressed badly, short of money and ill-looking, searching hungrily for fun. Then, once inside the conference capsule, we have heard the party pretending that Britain is a sunlit land of rich and self-confident

people, a place without shadows. The effect is surreal and it does not do the Tory cause much good.

Perhaps these blank simplicities are needed as an annual reward to the party faithful for cold nights huddling along suburban avenues with leaflets? Once in the hall, the representatives also speak in stark headlines. Moist-faced young men and grinning old ladies wildly applaud stale jokes against Labour. But one only needs to talk to them at fringe meetings, or in bars or restaurants, quickly to realise that they, too, are far subtler and more interesting than they appear when addressing the conference.

Talk about economics or the constitution, social security or the family, and they seem formidably informed, open-minded people. Often they are involved in local politics, or charities, or struggling businesses. We in the liberal press tend to sneer about them and patronise them; but they know more about the world than most journalists do - this one included.

These may seem points against the Conservatives but they apply to the other parties, too. There have been numerous clever jokes, well made rhetorical patterns and good news clips over the past three weeks from Labour, the Liberals, Democrats and the SNP. But I do not think I have

heard a single speech that really attempted to engage in a difficult, complicated debate, argue aloud and send the audience away thinking harder than when they came in.

Colleagues who have been coming to party conferences for longer than the decade I have, say that in the Fifties and Sixties leading politicians felt it part of their duty to educate conferences. If so, it has been forgotten. Conferences now seem to diminish almost anyone who comes into contact with them.

They perform other functions. They get politicians on to the news, though the deluge of announcements and speechifying means most of what happens is not seen by the voters. They give the press a chance to judge the direction and morale of the parties; to find that the 1995 conference season has been excellent for Labour and less good, though not disastrous, for the Tories, is worth knowing. They kick-start the political year, help settle strategies, bind the party together, allow contacts to be made and friendships to be renewed.

They force ministers and shadow ministers to meet and talk to the humbler people who work for them in the country. They enable ambitious, young, unknown people to grab the national spotlight. They have glorious moments of real drama. They are surrounded by amiable dinners and jolly

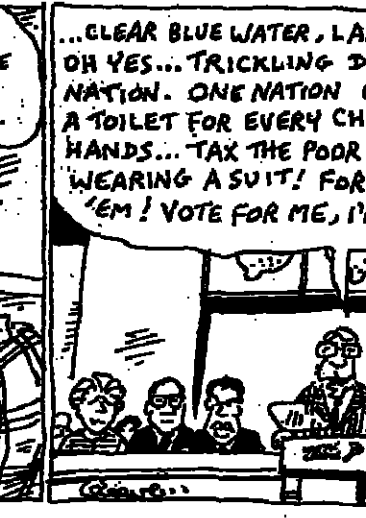
parties. For all those reasons, it would be ridiculous to be against party conferences as such.

This is, rather, a plea from the sidelines, a plea for politicians to rethink their attitude to these awful seaside weeks. The rhetorical tricks and phoney gimmicks of what are regarded as "good" conference speeches seem increasingly stale. They convey an impression of ministers and shadow ministers who are ignorant of their people, who feel that unless they keep it cheap and simple they will not be heard. If it is not true, there is a hunger for seriousness.

Who will deliver it? Well, there is one politician who has already made a refreshing un-speech, pleading for grown-up politics and sounding in public just like his private self.

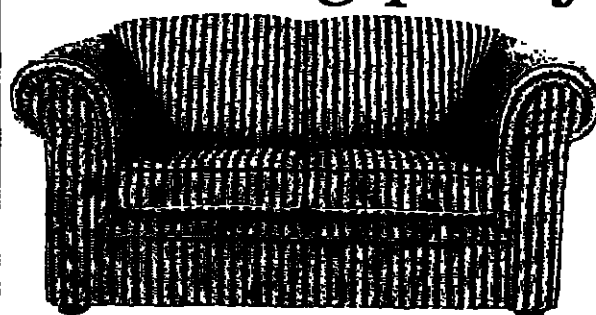
He said a year ago he wanted "no windy rhetoric, no facile phrases, no pious clichés, no shallow simplification, no mock-honest, mock-familiar, ad-man's speak" and he delivered "the gift phrases, the soundbites, the ritual conflicts" which obsess the political élite but bore normal people milking about elsewhere. That was John Major, speaking in Bournemouth last year. But in Blackpool, this year, we have had little else. He, too, has had to sit and grin through a sea of rubbish. When he performs today, I think we should judge him by his own good words.

Generation Why



by Tony Reeve and Steve Way

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Artur Barbosa

Barbosa: a character straight out of Anthony Powell

Barbosa worked at his drawing board until a few months before his death, when he began to be troubled by poor eyesight. Portraits of the Duke of Wellington and Edward Elgar for



Outside his work, Barbosa was a character who might have stepped straight from the pages of Anthony Powell's *Dance to the Music of Time*. He would have been a perfect guest at Lady Molly's and utterly at home with a bottle and adoring female company in the early hours of the morning with Dicky Ulftraville.

In the mid-1930s, as a result of his obsessive interest in the royal families of Europe up to 1914, he formed a court with his friends, and once a year, resplendently dressed in uniforms designed by himself, a grand ball was held. Barbosa was the Grand Duke, Rex Harrison was his aide-de-camp and Cecil Beaton the court photographer. There are some remarkable Beaton photographs of such occasions. A more lasting legacy of Barbosa's obsession is a collection of original photographs of members of European and Russian royal families from 1850 to 1914, which he put to-

Virgil Pomfret

Artur Ernesto Teixeira de Vasconcelos Barbosa, painter, illustrator and designer: born Liverpool 6 March 1908; twice married; died 5 October 1995

With a PhD in animal cytology Foster moved to St Mary's Hospital Medical School in 1947 to teach biology. Rather shy himself, he found it formidable to lunch with Sir Alexander Fleming, who was shy with strangers and limited his remarks to "yum" and "none."

Charles Foster's achievements show the necessity for sympathetic "interpreters" of science for the future development of medical research, but they are unlikely to travel such a long road, from classical botany to molecular cell biology techniques, as he did.



Foster: 'Interpreter' of science



Charles Lewis Foster, cell biologist and bountist; born 2 September 1912; Demonstrator, then Lecturer in Biology and Histology, Middlesex Hospital Medical School 1938-47; Lecturer in Biology, St Mary's Hospital Medical School 1947-48, Reader in Biology 1948-69, Professor of Cell Biology and Histology 1969-79 (Emeritus); married 1943, Margaret Woodward (died 1979, two daughters); married 1976 Anne Maddocks; died 27 September 1985.

at Queen Anne's, Crowtham, and attended Chelsea School of Art from 1946 to 1949 in those early post-war years characterised by a spirit of common purpose and enthusiasm. To get a space in the Monday lifeless you had to set up your easel on Sunday. She studied under Robert Medley, Henry Moore and Cedric Richards. Fellow students were Elisabeth Frink, John Berger, Anthony Rossiter and Jeff Hore who she married in 1957.

She went on to the Royal College of Art (from 1949 to 1952) studying under Cecil Weight and Ruskin Spear and specialising in mural design. While at the RCA she undertook three major commissions at the Chelsea Pensioners Rest Hall, the Tate Investors' Board Room and (the largest) for the National Farmers'

tion took place at the recently built Royal Festival Hall and she had work accepted for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, where she was to show often in later years. She and Jeff Hoare started married life in a flat in Elm Park Gardens, Chelsea. Laurie Lee, the writer, lived underneath and from time to time gave vent to his displeasure at the boisterous behaviour of their growing family by thumping on the ceiling with a broom-handle. With two children, they moved to St Peter's Square, Hammam Springs, in 1956.

From 1953 to 1955 she taught at the Crown Manor Boys' Club, Hoxton, and from 1965 to 1967 at the City Library for the Deaf. The years between were taken up by the cares of motherhood.

In 1965 she started teaching on the foundation course at the Central St Martin's College of Art and Design. The foundation course was one of the limited areas in teaching which called for the traditional skills of painting and drawing such as she possessed. The diploma course at the same college had switched its orientation entirely towards abstract painting. Her teaching relationship with Central St Martin's continued for the rest of her life. She had been appointed head of the Portfolio Preparation Course just before her death.

Unlike many painters she was glad to expand her teaching responsibilities. She refused to limit herself to the traditional contact, working visiting lecturer, to such universities as

India and its crafts occupied a special place in her painting, which favoured a strong, sometimes dazzling palette. Indian embroideries and artefacts embellished her house as well as her work. The house was particularly important to her. An 18th-century building on the Thames at Chiswick where she had been brought up as a child, she returned to it in 1981 and

the MUEKES, she produced two books: *Enchanted Circles* (1991; on the art of making wreaths and garlands) and *Still-life Watercolour Painting* (1994). Her creative energy was undaunted by a punishing schedule of solo exhibitions, 19 from 1977, most recently at the Kew Gardens Gallery and Sally Hunter Fine Art, nor the many mixed exhibitions to which she contributed both in the United

Kingdom and abroad. Her painting retained the freshness of a young woman and her sudden and fatal heart attack seems tragically premature.

Sally Hunter

Elizabeth Jane Lloyd, artist: born London 14 July 1928; married 1952 Jeff Hoare (three daughters, one son); died London 2 October 1985

Among their dancers were Erik Bruhn, who became a star of American Ballet Theatre, and Svedlana Beriosova, later a ballerina with the Royal Ballet. John Taras, who had been in Europe with the De Basil Ballet, made his choreography *Designs with Strings*, which Peter Williams designed. After some two years of touring the provinces, the company folded.

* Peter Williams's birthplace, Burton Joyce, is not in Cornwall but in Nottinghamshire.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5SD, (telephone to 0171-353 2811 or faxed to 0171-353 2810, and are charged at 55.00 a line (VAT extra). **OTHER** Gazette announcements (notices, Auctions, Share and company transfers, Marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

Anniversaries

1474: Mariotto Albertinelli, painter, 1474; Sir James Thomas Knowles, editor and architect, 1831; Lillie (Emilie Charlotte) Langens, actress, 1853; Mary Henrietta Kingsley, writer and explorer, 1862; Walter James Radermacher, poet, music critic and playwright, 1889; Deshafe Claudius I, Roman Emperor, poisoned by his wife Agrippina 54; Nicolas de Malebranche, philosopher, 1715; Sir Henry Irving (John Henry Brodribb), actor, 1906; Walter Houston Brattain, physicist, and an inventor of the transistor, 1987. On this day: the foundation stone of the White House.

British Red Cross

Mr Tony Blair MP, Leader of the Labour Party, and Mrs Cherie Blair, were the guests of honour at a reception held yesterday at the Industrial Society, London SW1, in aid of the British Red Cross's 125th Birthday Appeal. Mr Blair, Mr Mike Whitleam, Director-General, British Red Cross, and Mr John F. Gray, Director of Public Affairs, British Red Cross, were the speakers.

The joint Royal Academy of Engineering and Royal Society Lecture and Dinner was held yesterday evening at the Royal Society, London SW1. Mr Basil Butler gave the lecture. Sir Michael Atiyah, President, Royal Society, was in the chair. Sir William Barlow President, Royal Academy of Engineering, chaired the dinner.

James Wyzanski, Matthew Stuart Johnson, David Williams.

[illegible]

David Adler; Lisa Anne Olson; Philippa Catherine Daniels; Richard Purcell Darby; Marjorie Chubb; Amanda Weston; Sam

[illegible]

er Charles Baskin; Beverly Ruth Tarr; Sonnet Christopher Baker; Kristina Claudia Pichler; Nina Anne Glendon.

[illegible]

William Dunham, Addison, Robin Benedict, Allen Barnes, Larry Devron, Messender, Rupert, Patrick Hoffman, Thomas, David, ...

[illegible]

Synagogue services

Details of synagogue services to be held tomorrow may be obtained by telephoning the following. Sabbath begins in London at 5.57pm.

United Synagogue: 0171-387 4306. Federation of Synagogues: 0181-282 2261. Union of Liberal and Progressive Synagogues: 0171-580 1642. Reform Synagogues of Great Britain: 0171-249 4731. Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Congregation: 0171-299 2573. New London Synagogue (Masorti): 0171-328 1026.

[illegible]

and provided by the Irish Guards.

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CITY & BUSINESS EDITOR: JEREMY WARNER

BUSINESS NEWS DESK: Tel 0171-293 2548 Fax 0171-293 2098

MARKET SUMMARY									
STOCK MARKETS									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	12 Mth High	12 Mth Low	Yield (%)			
FTSE 100	3523.8	+49.5	+1.4	3570.8	2943.4	4.0			
FTSE 250	3936.4	+16.5	+0.4	3981.3	3200.9	5.5			
FTSE 350	1758.0	+20.7	+1.2	1778.3	1477.0	3.9			
FT Small Cap	1960.7	+2.01	+0.1	1993.1	1676.5	3.8			
FT All-Share	1737.4	+18.1	+1.1	1745.6	1465.1	3.8			
New York	4748.6	+13.4	+0.3	4801.8	3674.6	2.4			
Tokyo	17971.4	+80.2	+0.5	20148.8	14485.4	0.8			
Hong Kong	9685.1	+50.1	+0.5	9940.0	6967.9	3.2			
Frankfurt	2168.1	+12.8	+0.6	2317.0	1911.0	2.0			
Paris	1803.8	+8.3	+0.5	2017.3	1721.8	3.8			
Milan	9578.0	+81.0	+0.8	10911.0	9265.0	2.0			
*New Jones at 1500 hours. New Jones graph at 2200 hours									
MAIN PRICE CHANGES									
FTSE 350 companies (including investment trusts)									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	12 Mth High	12 Mth Low	Yield (%)			
Guardian Ry Ex	225	12	5.6	240	180	4.0			
Caribay	545.5	26.5	5.1	570	420	3.5			
WPP Group	155.5	7.5	5.1	160	120	2.5			
Bank of Scotland	257	12	4.9	270	180	4.0			
Gartmore	280	13	4.7	290	210	3.5			
INTEREST RATES									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	12 Mth High	12 Mth Low	Yield (%)			
Short sterling	4.75	0.00	0.0	4.75	4.75	4.75			
UK medium gilt	5.75	0.00	0.0	5.75	5.75	5.75			
US long bond	6.75	0.00	0.0	6.75	6.75	6.75			
CURRENCIES									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	12 Mth High	12 Mth Low	Yield (%)			
£/\$	1.575	+0.01	0.6	1.580	1.570	4.0			
£/DM	1.575	+0.01	0.6	1.580	1.570	4.0			
£/¥	157.5	+8.0	5.1	160.0	150.0	2.5			

RPI up 3.9%: Worst figure in three years dampens hopes of rates cut and adds £650m to benefits bill

Inflation setback for Chancellor

PAUL WALLACE
Economics Editor

Inflation jumped to its worst level for three years last month, causing more problems for Chancellor Kenneth Clarke and dampening hopes that the next move in interest rates may be down.

Retail price inflation rose in September from 3.6 to 3.9 per cent, leading to a much bigger increase in social security benefits next year than the Treasury had anticipated at the time of the last Budget. This will make it harder for Mr Clarke to offer substantial tax cuts.

The underlying inflation rate targeted by the Government - which excludes mortgage interest payments - also rose sharply from 2.9 to 3.1 per cent, the first time it has been above 3 per cent for two years. The increase, which was greater than expected in the City, dampened hopes that the next

move in interest rates might be down.

The September figure for inflation is particularly important because it is used as the basis for uprating social security benefits. According to the Department of Social Security, the Government will have to pay £2.8bn for inflation rather than the £2.15bn that had been projected in the last Budget.

The increase of 3.9 per cent is because the Treasury assumed last year a 3 per cent rate for the RPI in September 1995 and a 2.25 per cent increase for the Rossi index, which excludes most housing costs and is used to uprate means-tested benefits such as income support. This assumption proved over-optimistic, with the RPI at 3.9 per cent and the Rossi index rising by 3 per cent.

The figures jolted interest rate expectations. A fall in the short sterling contract for December suggests that the City

now thinks rates will be on hold till the end of the year. Only a week ago, the contract implied a decline of almost a quarter per cent.

The main area of concern in the figures was the evidence of a push by retailers to rebuild margins. A quarter of the increase in the annual rate of inflation came from price increases in non-seasonal food, which are now running at 4.4 per cent compared with just over 1 per cent as recently as April.

"Supermarkets are increasing their margins at an astonishing rate," said Ian Shepherdson, economist at HSBC Greenwell. He suggested that loyalty schemes were merely a device to hide higher prices.

Shops selling household goods, clothing and footwear

also lifted margins. Clothing and footwear prices increased by 3.9 per cent in the month. This alone contributed two-fifths of the monthly increase of 0.5 per cent in the RPI in September.

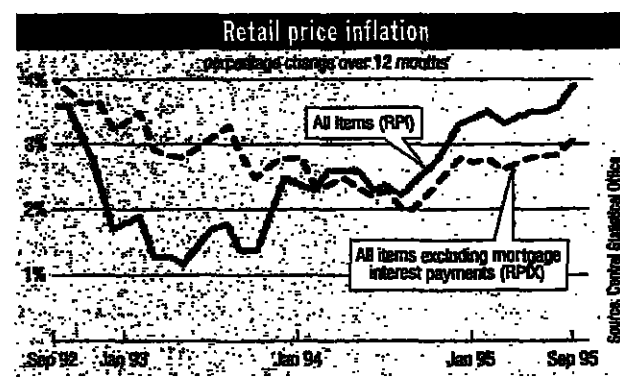
A vital question is whether consumers will resist price rises. The next couple of months' retail sales data will be of key importance, Mr Shepherdson said. "Will consumers support higher prices?"

An indication that they might not came from the CBI distributive trades survey, which reported that sales failed to recover in September as much as retailers had expected. Alastair Eperon, chairman of the survey panel, said that underlying sales seemed to be flattening as consumers remained cautious. Retailers were anticipating higher sales in October - but he pointed out that expected sales growth had been fully realised in only three out of the last 12 months.

Despite the disappointing figure for September, the outlook for headline inflation seems set to improve. The recent cut in mortgage rates will affect the index from October. At the same time, the rise in mortgage rates which lifted the index last October will drop out next month.

Additional help may come from a decline in seasonal food inflation. A jump from 9.4 to 13.4 per cent in September accounted for a quarter of the increase in the headline rate of inflation.

Kenneth Clarke certainly drew some comfort from this factor, saying that "today's inflation figures are still being affected by the aftermath of a hot summer on food prices." The Chancellor said that inflation remained under control. He pointed to moderate growth in earnings and said that underlying competitive pressures in retailing remained "intense".



Takeover fever grips Grand Metropolitan

JOHN EISENHAMMER
and JOHN SHEPHERD

Investors bet £30m yesterday on Grand Metropolitan, the international food and drinks colossus headed by Lord Shephard, falling prey to a break-up bid, as big-deal fever gripped the London market. The latest UK inflation figures, which showed an unexpected rise to the highest level for more than two years, were shrugged off as expectations of several imminent mega-deals drove the FTSE 100 index easily back through the 3,500 level, up nearly 50 points to 3,523.8.

Speculation about the suit for GrandMet centered on Kohlberg Kravis Roberts, the American leveraged buy-out specialist that made its mark in the 1980s with the record-breaking purchase of RJR Nabisco.

GrandMet, which owns Burger King, IDV, the spirits business and Pillsbury, was being propped up as a break-up target as the market saw unusually heavy action in options on the stock.

Dealers traded more than 1,500 contracts, of a million shares each, in call options of the November series at 50p. This compared with a stock market cash price yesterday of 44p, lifted 14p by the rumours. The latest share price valued GrandMet at nearly £10bn.

The prospect of a monster bid ignited a market already raging with speculation of bids and counter-bids in the water and electricity sectors, and sentiment that the battle for Gartmore, the UK fund manager, is entering the closing stages.

Shares in Gartmore, which has attracted a wide circle of potential suitors from the City, the

Pearson denies bid for Telegraph but likely to extend its TV interests



Poised for flight: The cast of 'Birds of a Feather', a SelectTV production

MATHEW HORSMAN

Bidder tunes into SelectTV

SelectTV, the independent producer, is in talks with an unnamed bidder that may lead to a takeover, the company confirmed yesterday.

City analysts speculated that Pearson, which publishes the *Financial Times* and Associated Newspapers, publishers of the *Daily Mail*, could be buyers.

The news came on a day of intense rumours in the market, with the Telegraph group, Pearson and Mirror Group all the subject of bid speculation.

Pearson denied that it planned a bid for Conrad Black's 58 per cent stake in the Telegraph but refused comment on speculation it might be

among the potential buyers of SelectTV. Senior executives at the Telegraph did not return calls last night, but the market expects some activity today in Telegraph shares, and moved on from Pearson to Mr Black himself as a possible buyer.

A proposed offer by Mr Black's Hollinger Inc. to buy out minority Telegraph shareholders failed earlier this year when independent directors could

not agree a price. Mr Black had been willing to pay up to 470p a share, compared to the close last night of 336, up 6 on the day.

It was also rumoured Mr Black was preparing to exercise an option over 5 per cent of Telegraph shares held by Lord Hartwell, for £30m.

SelectTV, makers of the hit series *Birds of a Feather* also operates its own cable channel and has a stake in Meridian, the ITV

broadcaster for the South and Southeast. It owns 20 per cent of UKTV, the highest bidder in the auction for Channel 5, due to be awarded within weeks.

There is speculation that Pearson, also in a consortium bidding for Channel 5, may be interested in SelectTV's production arm, to complement Thames and Grundy, its independent producers.

There were rumours early in the day that MAL, which holds 61 per cent of Meridian and is a partner of Pearson in its Channel 5 bid, might be interested in consolidating its Meridian holding. But insiders denied any involvement. The Pearson bid made more sense, according to analysts.

IN BRIEF

Maxwell trial hears legal argument

The Maxwell trial at the Old Bailey was taken up with legal argument yesterday, and the jury was not called. Kevin Maxwell and his brother Ian together with ex-Maxwell aide, Larry Trahtenberg, all deny conspiracy to defraud the pension funds by misuse of investments. Kevin Maxwell is expected to take the stand next week as the defence begins its case.

SFA imposes conditions on Saloman

Salomon brothers, the giant American investment bank, has has "special conditions" imposed on it for the next 12 months by the Securities and Futures Authority (SFA). The SFA has concluded that Saloman had been in breach of SIB Principle 9 in that its control system had "failed to keep pace with the expansion and complexity of its business". Although Saloman has corrected these failings, the SFA has required the bank to provide special monthly reports highlighting any problems with general ledger accounts. Saloman's auditors will review these reports every quarter and pass on their findings to the SFA.

BAe wins orders for Avro jet

British Aerospace has won three orders for seven Avro regional jet airliners. Turkish Airlines is buying four Avro RJ 70s, to be delivered in May next year. Two Avro RJ 85s are to be added to a previous order for five planes by Lufthansa City Airlines, while the Australian airline National Jet System has ordered one Avro RJ 70 for delivery by the end of the year.

Eurotunnel appoints railways chief

Eurotunnel has appointed James Evans as director of railway relations. He will play a key role in the talks with rail operators BR and SNCF over renegotiating the railway usage contract, vital to improving Eurotunnel's revenues.

Leeson bondholder action fails

Attempts to have disgraced futures trader Nick Leeson tried in the UK faced collapse yesterday. Bondholders who lost more than £50m on the demise of Barings merchant bank have failed in their attempts to have Mr Leeson repatriated to face eight summonses alleging that he obtained money by deception and false accounting. The action, brought by the Barings Perpetual Noteholders Action Group, was due to be heard before City of London Magistrates on 30 October. The bondholders could still appeal to the High Court.

Ford to buy back £2bn in stock

The Ford Motor Company intends to buy back around \$2bn of its own preferred stock and is considering the sale of parts of USL Capital and part of The Associates Corp, the non-automotive financing businesses in its financial services group. Ford announced it was increasing the fourth quarterly dividend on its common and Class B shares by 13 per cent to \$0.35 cents a share, making the fourth rise since the first quarter of last year.

Ministers given small firms overview

The Government has given responsibility for small firms to ministers in each of 17 Whitehall departments that have links with business. The new ministerial network will be co-ordinated by Richard Page, the small firms minister at the Department of Trade and Industry.

Three more leave Etam

TOM STEVENSON
Deputy City Editor

The revolving doors at the troubled high-street retailer Etam continued spinning yesterday as three directors quit following the announcement of worse than expected interim losses. The company's shares, which have already halved over the past year, slipped a further 14p to close at 153p.

The departures follow five other resignations from Etam's

board this year, including that of Sir John Nott, the former chairman. The latest resignations included Rodney East, the former managing director and Keith Miles, finance director.

Announcing a loss of £3.82m (£4.74m profit) for the six months to August, Etam warned that there had been no improvement in trading since the annual meeting earlier in the year. "Etam's annual results are greatly dependent on the second half trading. For these

reasons we must be cautious about the outcome of results for the full financial year."

That profits warning, the latest of several this year, followed a slump in sales from £113m to £107m. With high fixed costs such as rents in expensive locations, the inability to increase sales has devastated the group's underlying profitability.

As a result the interim dividend was cut from 1.95p to 0.5p. Analysts expect another cut at the full year stage.

'Free Clowes now' plea

A solicitor acting for Peter Clowes, the jailed financier serving 10 years for theft and fraud, appealed yesterday for his client to be freed early to spare the taxpayer further expense, writes Nic Cunniff.

Malcolm Firman, a solicitor at Latimer Lee, the Manchester law firm, said that Clowes's legally-aided battle to overturn a Parole Board decision not to release him was set to cost at least £50,000.

Even if the Parole Board's de-

cision is upheld by the High Court later this year, Clowes was still likely to be freed in the next year or so, Mr Firman claimed. "At a time when people are talking about the rising costs of legal aid it seems madness for the system to hand out cases like this on a plate," he said.

"The question that should be asked is whether it is in the public interest to keep someone a prisoner who is not a danger to the public, who has a loving wife and two small children and

a job to go to if he is freed."

Mr Firman's comments follow a decision by the Court of Appeal earlier this week to allow an appeal by Clowes against the Parole Board decision.

Clowes was sentenced in February 1992. His £1m defence costs were paid for by the taxpayer. He has served four years making him eligible for parole but his application for early release was refused because the board felt he had not come to terms with his offences.

Negative equity numbers start to rise again

NIC CUNIFF

The number of home-owners facing negative equity rose by more than 90,000 in the past three months, reversing the downward trend set in the first half of the year.

The increase raises to more than 1.1 million the households whose mortgages are greater than the value of their homes. This figure is more than 20 per cent higher than for the same period last year.

Average levels of negative equity remain constant, at about £7,000 for the country as a whole and £9,500 in London

and the South-east, according to a report published yesterday. Woolwich Building Society, which published the survey, said the blight on property values affected regions differently, with the North of England, the East Midlands, Yorkshire and Humberside hit hardest.

Peter Robinson, managing director at Woolwich, said yesterday: "The rise in negative equity will maintain the feel-bad factor in the housing market."

The Chancellor has the opportunity in his November Budget to stimulate the housing market, hopefully by targeting first-time buyers with enhanced

benefits. Without some induced stimulation to house prices during the quiet winter months, negative equity could be affecting many more households by early spring.

A separate quarterly survey by Halifax Building Society showed house prices fell by 1 per cent on the previous three months. They were also down 2.6 per cent on the same period last year.

About three-quarters of people facing negative equity are first-time buyers, most of them having bought their homes between 1988, the height of the boom, and 1991.

The total of negative equity in the UK now stands at about £7.5bn, some £500m up on the previous quarter.

Hilary McVitt, a manager at Woolwich, denied suggestions that mortgage lenders were seeking a return to a 1980s-style house price boom.

She said: "The figures on negative equity are a matter of concern, particularly at this point in the economic cycle."

Alliance & Leicester Building Society said yesterday it is to close 43 branches in the next six months, about 12 per cent of its network, with the possible loss of 200 jobs.

The hardest-hit regions		
Region	Negative equity for third quarter 1995 (Average value (£))	% of owner-occupiers
North	2,500	8
York & Humber	1,600	9
East Midlands	4,700	5
East Anglia	8,400	9
Greater London	9,500	9
South East (excl London)	9,500	9
South West	8,000	10
West Midlands	4,000	2
North West	3,200	8
Wales	3,200	7
Scotland	0	1
Northern Ireland	0	1
UK	7,000	7

business

Takeover bids: A rash of activity generating huge corporate fees has led a scramble for office space in a boom reminiscent of the late 1980s

City firms profit from return of feelgood factor

JOHN EISENHAMMER and JOHN WILLCOCK

Boom-time beckons in the City again as corporate finance departments power towards a bumper year on a surge of big deals, and the property market enjoys a spurt of activity as expanding firms compete for bigger and better offices.

A year ago the corporate finance departments of City investment banks were struggling to make a contribution to group earnings. Now the whirlwind of takeovers and mergers is producing fat fees and expectations of even fatter bonuses. "1995 is already a vintage year, the corporate finance side is making money faster than it can count," one Rothschild executive said. *Acquisitions Monthly*, the magazine, recently reported that the value of mergers and acquisitions deals this year is set to break the 1989 record.

"We are back to the pace of the late 1980s, and it is pretty sure to carry on for some while yet," says a Deutsche Morgan Grenfell executive. This dramatic recovery in investment banking from the trough of last year, together with a spurt of overseas banks moving to boost their representation in

London, has knocked-on to renewed activity at the top end of the City property market.

Retail agents letting space in the City have just raised their top rents from £32.50 to £35 per square foot, while rent-free periods for top-quality developments are coming right back, according to Mark Lethbridge, an associate in Richard Ellis's City agency department.

The decision by Deutsche Bank to take 300,000sq ft next to its Morgan Grenfell investment bank subsidiary in Winchester House, has been followed by other smaller lettings. Allied Trust Bank has expanded its existing space in Cannon Bridge by 10,000sq ft,

while Sanwa Bank has added 6,000sq ft at City Place House, said Mr Lethbridge.

All these deals have been for top-quality offices, reflecting the renewed confidence of investment banks boosted by better trading earnings and the big rewards for huge deals. In the just completed Lloyds-TSB merger, the two sets of main advisers, Baring Brothers and J.P. Morgan, are expected to earn over £6m apiece. Barings, which was bankrupted earlier this year before being rescued by ING of the Netherlands, is likely to be among the M & A leaders in this year's league table, thanks to big deals like Lloyds and Glaxo-Wellcome.

Deal activity, which usually lags behind economic recovery, is now rapidly coming on stream. Unlike the late 1980s, which saw mainly leveraged bids powered by financial considerations, today's deals tend to be industrially driven, with consolidation across sectors, such as pharmaceuticals, food, the utilities and financial services. At £40.34bn, M&A deals in the UK during the first nine months soared past £13.65bn for the same period last year, and £25.27bn for the whole of 1994.

This has meant organic growth by UK banks and overseas banks already here, according to George Gillon, City partner with the agents Drivers Jonas. "Since the summer there has been a surge of people in the financial sector - investment banks and overseas representative banks - who want more space," said Mr Gillon.

J Henry Schroder Wagg, the corporate finance arm of Schroders, has recently taken an additional 40,000sq ft in TSB's old head office in Milk Street, he said. American investment

bank JP Morgan has taken more space in its Ldgate offices while UK merchant bank Close Brothers has moved to a new head office.

Mr Gillon said that information providers and medium-sized legal practices were also benefiting from the recovery in City business generally. Thomson Financial Services is taking more space in the Aldgate offices it moved to last year, while at least four law firms are looking for space.

The City of London Corporation is fearful that it will lose

the large overseas investment banks currently looking for space at Canary Wharf, since there is an acute shortage of modern, large office buildings in the City. In particular, the investment banks seeking to move are looking for premises with football field-sized spaces for dealing floors. There is a surplus of poor-grade buildings, which will probably never be let again and urgently need redeveloping.

Mr Lethbridge pointed out that there is 6.36 million square feet of vacant office space in the City, or 9.5 per cent of all ex-

isting office buildings. This compares to just 2 per cent in the boom years of the late 1980s and up to 16 per cent in the depths of the recession. Less than half this vacant space consists of buildings that would be considered "grade A", Mr Gillon said. Nevertheless the German banks that together have decided to make London the home of their investment banking operations are determined to stay in the City - even if this means building their own offices, he said.

The trailblazer was Deutsche

Bank in the summer. It decided to build its own 300,000sq ft head office next to its recently acquired subsidiary Morgan Grenfell in Winchester Avenue. It determined hiring to build up the investment banking operations - some 80 people have been taken on since the beginning of the year, many from Warburgs - has contributed to another phenomenon, a surge in pay. Rival banks are beginning to complain vociferously of the way the rash of cheque-book poaching is helping to push up remuneration levels.



Hitting the right number: Credit Suisse's dealing room in the City

Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

Mergers & Acquisitions

Financial advisers on UK deals (Jan-Sep 1995)

Rank	Adviser	Value (£bn)
1	Robert Fleming	10.7
2	M&L Rothschild	9.6
3	Barings	9.5
4	Schroders	8.4
5	SBC Warburg	8.2
6	Goldman Sachs	7.6
7	Deutsche Morgan Grenfell	7.3
8	Kleinwort Benson	6.2

Source: Acquisitions Monthly

Provident reveals £25m takeover inducement

NIC CICUTTI

More than 200,000 policyholders from the Provident Mutual life fund, using calculations described as reasonable by Tillinghast, consulting actuaries.

To sweeten the deal, investors in a range of Provident Mutual life and pension policies will receive 0.4 per cent per year, or slightly more in some cases, of the total amount they have so far saved, including investment gains. Those who have annuities with Provident Mutual will get an increase in annual retirement income of 0.5 per cent.

In practice, someone paying £30 a month into a 25-year with-profits endowment started in 1985 will have £75 added to their policy over three years. A personal pension plan holder

whose fund is worth £8,000 will have £100 added to their account overall.

The company said yesterday that, although a one-off, the payment would be included in the calculation of future bonuses and was therefore likely to increase over the lifetime of that policy. The full amount will only be paid if the policy is maintained until December 1998.

Of the total of 500,000 policyholders, about 300,000 are not classed as members and will not be in line for a payout from General Accident.

A spokesman for Provident Mutual said: "One important point is that while the payments are for our with-profits savers, our unit-linked policyholders will also gain."

"They will benefit from the fact that charges levied on most funds will not go up beyond the cost of living for 10 years. There will also be a cap on discretionary expenses for unit-linked policies."

"This is significant, because the charges levied by the company on policyholders funds, both with-profits and unit-linked, are well below the industry average already."

He added that unless the deal with GA is agreed, Provident Mutual would not be able to attract new business profitably, leading to a cut in returns for policyholders.

Provident Mutual payouts	
For with-profits policies	
Current value of fund	Expected bonus
£10,000	£100
£20,000	£200
£30,000	£300
£40,000	£400
£50,000	£500
For unit-linked policies	
Monthly payment	Expected bonus
£30	£75
£50	£125
£75	£187
£100	£250

Bancorp's value gets a boost

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

NatWest Group's negotiations to sell its US retail banking operations were boosted yesterday by a 41 per cent rise in pre-tax profits at Bancorp to \$337m (£225m) for the first nine months from \$240m a year before. NatWest is looking for more than £2.5bn from the sale of the New Jersey-based Bancorp group.

Bancorp posted lower net income for the nine months to 30 September, at \$185m compared with \$215m in the same period of 1994. The bank said the fall reflected the inclusion of a full Federal income tax provision in 1995 following the utilisation of tax-offsetting benefits in the previous three years.

John Tugwell, NatWest Bancorp's chairman and chief executive, who is the highest-paid man in the group, earning last year a total of £1.5m, said: "These achievements combined with our expanded marketplace presence have enhanced the value of the NatWest Bancorp franchise."

NatWest has decided to take advantage of the current state of big retail banking mergers and takeovers in the US to cash in on Bancorp at what it hopes will be a full price.

Exchange holds up pay rules

PETER RODGERS
Business Editor

The Stock Exchange yesterday bowed to pressure from industry and delayed full implementation of the Greenbury Code on top pay, because of difficulties in framing some of the rules.

Provisions to force companies to seek shareholder approval for long-term incentive schemes were among those put off until next year for further consultation.

Other measures delayed were the new rules that phase the granting of options, a ban on the issue of options at a discount, and the recommendation that the full value of directors' pension entitlements is disclosed.

The decision follows protests from companies about what some claim was the high-handed way the exchange put out draft changes to the listing rules - the Yellow Book - at the end of July, inviting comments on relatively minor variations only.

The exchange said it had received 170 replies to the consultative document and had revised its proposals to reflect them.

As well as the details of some new rules being delayed until the first quarter of next year, those that have been agreed will not now come into effect until 31 December, rather than the

planned date of the end of this month, to give companies time to familiarise themselves with the requirements.

The new rules that have been agreed - and published as an official revision of the Yellow Book - force companies to increase the disclosure of directors' earnings, as the Greenbury committee recommended.

They also oblige companies to make a statement of compliance with the Greenbury recommendation that remuneration committees should be given a new independence - a sensitive area because the Greenbury report could lead to the creation for the first time of a separate class of directors on company boards, with their own responsibilities.

Company law states that all directors have equal responsibility for running a company. One company chairman said the changes could amount to the first step towards establishing supervisory boards in Britain.

The rules in the revised Yellow Book also oblige companies to make a statement that full consideration has been given to the best practice provisions on remuneration policy, service contracts and compensation.

Another consultative document will be issued at the end of the month.



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معلومات من الامم



"If Mr Clarke is to do more than tease the country when he delivers the Budget, he had better be right about inflation being under control"

Clarke's luck with prices may be running out

While the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, "couldn't possibly comment" on the near certainty of a tax-cutting Budget, he was quick to say something at yesterday's Conservative Party conference about the extremely disappointing inflation figures for September, which he blamed largely on the effect of a hot summer on food prices. Inflation, he claimed, remained under control. If Mr Clarke is to do more than tease the country when he delivers the Budget, he had better be right. Lower than expected inflation has been vital in allowing him to squeeze public spending plans. It has meant that wage inflation has remained low, making the public sector pay-bill freeze much easier to implement.

The cost of getting it wrong is graphically illustrated by the impact of the September inflation figure on social security expenditure. With inflation at almost 4 per cent rather than the 3 per cent projected at the time of the last Budget, the Chancellor now has to find an extra £650m to uprate social security benefits to take account of inflation. If inflation continued to worsen, this could lay the ground for a pick-up in pay inflation next year, which would knock through to the public sector.

It is, however, still too early to conclude that the game is up on retail price inflation, which has tended to surprise this year by coming in below expectations. Although a rise in seasonal food prices accounted for a quarter of the jump in the inflation rate, the

main drive came from an attempt by retailers to rebuild their margins. We have been here before. So far, consumer resistance to higher prices has largely prevailed. The Confederation of British Industry's distributive trades survey for September suggests that consumers are continuing to push up prices by withholding their custom. For all his slip-ups, Kenneth Clarke has been a lucky Chancellor so far. His luck may hold but he will be watching next week's retail sales figures as anxiously as anyone.

North West's strategy is seriously flawed

It is always possible that Sir Desmond Piche, chairman of North West Water, will prove the rest of us wrong but it seems unlikely. While there have certainly been more seriously flawed takeovers than North West Water's bid for Norweb, there have not been many in the £1.8bn league. The best that North West shareholders can expect from the high price being exacted for this Lancastrian *folie de grandeur* is that one and one will end up equaling two; much more likely it will equal a good deal less. The ease with which North West has hoovered up nearly 30 per cent of Norweb's share capital shows the market's strong preference in this case for cash over shares. You do not have to probe very far to find out why.

Forget all the talk about synergies. It is delusion to believe they can possibly exist between water and electricity companies. If there is commercial merit in this takeover it is to do with cost-cutting, cash flow and tax, not industrial logic. Deals done purely for tax reasons are nearly always bad ones; the tax rules can be changed. As for the match between the cash generating attributes of an electricity company and the cash needs of a water company, it remains to be seen how this will survive the effects of the last review of electricity tariff controls.

That leaves cost-cutting, where the scope is clearly considerable. North West's record, however, hardly inspires confidence that it is up to the task. The spanking new £350m computerised billing system North West is so keen to promote, is, in fact, nothing to boast about. It is an IT white elephant with few redeeming features. Like all IT, it is unlikely to be easily adaptable to dealing with the entirely different and more complex billing system that is used by the electricity industry. The scope for costly cock-ups in putting in place the combined facilities management company is substantial.

To make matters worse, North West may have been forced to overpay for Norweb. It is to be hoped that the now almost universal perception of this deal - that it is being driven primarily by fees and ego - is wrong. Sir Desmond and his team are going to have to work hard to overcome it, however. A windfall utilities tax, by this Government or

the next, would seal its fate as one of the most ill judged and ill conceived takeovers of the present merger boom.

Why no word on the nuclear sale?

Few would disagree that nuclear and rail are the dogs of the Government's privatisation programme. One barked with joy this week, after Sir George Young, the Transport Secretary, announced the Railtrack sale would definitely go ahead in the spring. The other stayed conspicuously silent. Not a word of the nuclear sale was mentioned in the conference speech by Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade and the minister responsible.

This could be no more than an oversight, or perhaps it reflects the Government's rough indication a few months ago that it would like the nuclear sale to go ahead next summer. Why say more at this stage? On the other hand, if Sir George dared boast at the party conference that he was determined to push through something as unpopular as the rail sale - once dubbed the poll tax on wheels - why is Mr Lang not barking as loudly?

The nuclear companies are unaware of any change of timetable and perhaps there is none, as yet. The sale of British Energy, as it is called, requires a complex merger of two firms and the separation from the organisation of the Magnox reactors, under the organisation of the British Nuclear Fuels, their prospective (and reluctant) new owner.

Does silence indicate that the Government, too, is wondering whether it can pull off the nuclear sale? If it slips as little as three months into the autumn the risk of becoming snarled up in an election campaign will be enormous. The market will not be in the mood to buy something so suspect at poll-watching time, and the less the electorate has to be reminded of nuclear power at the hustings the better.

Railtrack is now looking rather different. The City remains deeply sceptical about the company, which is reliant for its income on indirect subsidies funnelled through the train operators that use its services. But Sir George really means to push it through. As the seller, the Government has the whip hand. Not only can it adjust the price and the debt levels to smarten up Railtrack for City consumption, it could also, if pressed, offer guarantees against the costs of changes in regulation and taxation, to offset some of the uncertainty Labour is generating with its threats of renationalisation. Such pledges have already been made to bidders for rail franchises.

The odds are that Railtrack will go through, albeit on terms so generous that it will make even the great regional electricity company giveaway look reasonable by comparison. But it is going to take the re-election of John Major to get nuclear into the private sector.

Manweb directors enjoy £3-4m payoff bonanza after takeover

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Directors of Manweb, the regional firm taken over last week by Scottish Power after a fierce battle, left the company with payoffs estimated to be worth between £3m and £4m. The main beneficiary is thought to be John Roberts, Manweb's chief executive, who gains more than £1m from termination of his two-year rolling contract, share options and shares. As the final chapter of Manweb's struggle closed, Texas Energy Partners withdrew its bid for another regional firm, Norweb, after a knockout £1.8bn bid on Wednesday by rival North West Water. Texas is now believed to be preparing to launch a fresh bid for another electricity company.

Scottish Power, which last Friday night owned or had acceptances in respect of 61 per cent of Manweb's shares, has replaced Mr Roberts with Mike Kinski, one of its own directors. Ian Robinson, Scottish Power's chief executive, becomes chairman of Manweb.

Mr Robinson called on all remaining Manweb shareholders to accept the £1.1bn offer - worth £9.90 per share - which has now been recommended by the outgoing board. But the Scottish group is thought to be surprised at the amount of money it has had to pay to the former directors of the electricity firm.

City analysts continued to speculate over which electricity company would be the next to fall. Texas Energy, a partnership between Houston Industries and Central South West, is known to have a shortlist of favoured targets. One industry source said: "They will analyse their options. The pressure to move is that these regional firms are a dying breed. They are becoming extinct."

Texas Energy said: "North West Water's further increased offer valued at £1.70 is at a level where we see no merits for our shareholders to compete for the rail sale - once dubbed the poll tax on wheels - why is Mr Lang not barking as loudly?"

The pressure to act is that these companies are a dying breed

Employees of Norweb and North West Water will. Tom Shockley, co-chairman of Texas, said that the partners continue to believe in the rationale underlying the bid for Norweb, which at one point had been favoured by the electrici-

ty firm's board. The Takeover Panel gave Texas Energy permission to withdraw without having issued its offer document, which industry sources said will allow it more flexibility in coming back with a different bid.

Shares in London Electricity jumped by 29p to £9.27 as City analysts singled it out as the likeliest alternative for the US group or for a bid from Thames Water. There was also speculation that Yorkshire Electricity could fall prey to either Texas or to GEC.

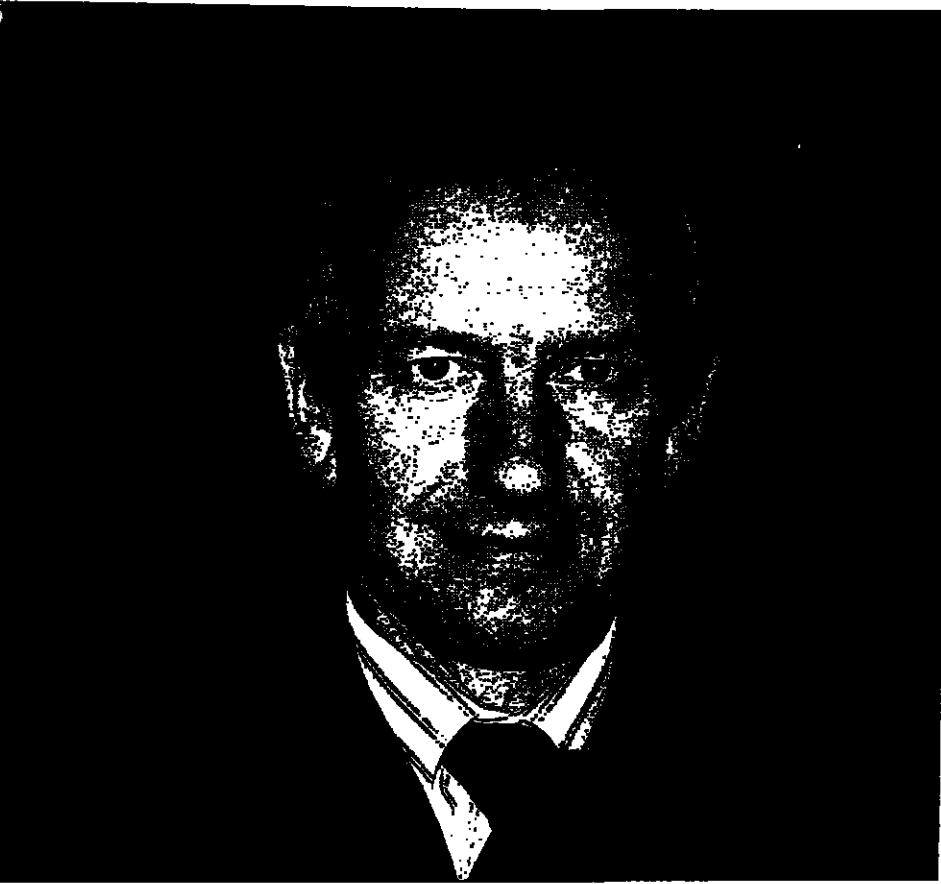
North West Water, whose £11.70 per share offer has been criticised in the City as "very overpriced", yesterday took its stake in Norweb to 29.9 per cent. The company will seek shareholder approval for the acquisition at an Extraordinary General Meeting in Manchester today. Unions attacked the plans to

merge North West with Norweb, predicting that thousands of jobs will go. Unions, the public sector union, plans to lobby the EGM, dressed as "fat cats", under the banner: "Public service not private sleaze".

A union spokesman said that the takeover would benefit only directors and large shareholders rather than customers. North West has admitted that the takeover will not feed through in lower bids for water customers for several years.

One City analyst warned of the regulatory and political risks facing the enlarged group, which will now be subject to price controls and scrutiny by two watchdogs, Ofwat and Ofwat.

Earlier this week Jack Cunningham, Labour's trade and industry spokesman, demanded the entire electricity industry be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.



Better off: John Roberts, Manweb chief executive, who gains over £1m from termination of a two-year rolling contract, share options and shares. Photograph: UPPA

Daiwa to close trust arm in New York

RICHARD LLOYD-PARRY
Tokyo

The embattled Daiwa Bank has decided to liquidate one of its New York subsidiaries, as the Japanese government struggles to distance itself from the scandal of the bank's huge losses on the New York bond market.

According to sources quoted by the Kyodo news agency yesterday, the bank's US trust arm, Daiwa Bank Trust, will be closed down, and its business transferred to other Daiwa branches. Between 1984 and 1987 two employees of the company incurred losses of \$97m, which were finally written off in September last year. They came to light only this month during investigations into a separate bond scandal at the parent bank's New York branch, where a senior dealer, Yoshihide Iguchi, racked up losses of \$1.1bn during 11 years of illegal trading.

The US authorities are investigating both cases on the suspicion that Daiwa may have deliberately concealed the losses from banking regulators.

Last night the director-general of the Japanese Ministry of Finance's International Finance Bureau, Eisuke Sakakibara, conceded for the first time that senior Daiwa personnel may have acted improperly in keeping the losses hidden for so long. "I was deeply disturbed by the way the bank reported the Daiwa Trust business to us," he said, "because it does suggest some involvement on the part of the management."

The affair is very embarrassing to the Ministry of Finance, which is struggling to rebut suggestions that it colluded with Daiwa in concealing Mr Iguchi's fraud. The former Daiwa chairman, Akira Fujita, visited the ministry's banking bureau on 8 August and said the bank was investigating the losses.

In the days following this meeting, Daiwa actively increased its funding operations, in an apparent attempt to cover its losses. But the first that the US Federal Reserve knew of the problem was on 18 September.

Montagu to pay £170m in B&C settlement

JOHN WILLCOCK
Financial Correspondent

Samuel Montagu, the merchant bank owned by HSBC, is to pay £160m plus £10m costs in an out-of-court settlement to the administrators of British & Commonwealth, the crashed financial conglomerate built up by John Ginn in the 1980s.

This represents the UK's biggest single payment on record to creditors of a bust company. Sir William Purves, chairman of HSBC, intervened personally to engineer a settlement of the complex "Quadrax" litigation which has dragged on for seven years.

The deal clears the way for a payout by the administrators of a further £227m, representing 15p in the pound to creditors of B&C Holdings and 5p in the pound to those of B&C Group Finance.

The administrators, Stephen Adamson of Ernst & Young and Peter Phillips of Buchler Phillips, are in the process of distributing a total of £1.25bn. The biggest creditor is Law Debenture Corporation, which is trustee to a number of pension fund investments. Others owed large sums include Barclays, Midland, Royal Bank of Scotland, Credit Lyonnais and Chase Manhattan.

The case concerned the aborted sale of B&C's money-broking division to Quadrax in 1987.

Mr Ginn, now no longer

connected with B&C, agreed to sell the money-broking side to Quadrax, then run by American entrepreneur Gary Klesch. Following the collapse of stockmarkets in October 1987 Quadrax pulled out of the deal, and B&C then sued the company and the adviser on the deal, Samuel Montagu. B&C claimed that the merchant bank had underwritten the deal, while the bank denied this.

B&C then lost £500m over the disastrous acquisition of Atlantic Computers - still the subject of litigation. B&C went into administration in 1990 with debts of £1bn. Mr Phillips was appointed co-administrator and took over the legal case against

Hill Samuel. Quadrax had since collapsed, leaving nothing to sue. Yesterday's settlement was welcomed by Mr Phillips as "brilliant news" but leaves a number of remaining problems. Mr Ginn is still facing disqualification proceedings as a director by the Department of Trade and Industry. And the administrators are fighting a £150m legal claim by the Inland Revenue concerning the sale of "Teleate" by B&C in 1985.

The administrators are also suing BZW, the investment bank owned by Barclays, and Spicer & Oppenheim, an accountancy firm now part of Touche Ross, for well over £600m.



John Ginn: still facing DTI disqualification proceedings

Unipart in £2m tax scheme

RUSSELL HOTTEN

Unipart, the car spares and components company, put almost £2m into special accounts so directors could avoid likely tax rises on high earners should the Labour Party be elected, it emerged last night.

The money was put aside six days before the 1992 general election, and was drawn upon by the directors over the next three financial years, ending in March 1995.

Unipart, which has paid £80,000 to the Conservative Party over the past two years,

said the scheme would not be reintroduced because Tony Blair was not promising to lift high earners. Other senior staff were also believed to have been granted similar schemes as a "hedge" against the election of a Labour government.

The schemes were not uncommon at other companies, and were reported in the Unipart accounts, though the reasons were not given. But at a time of increasing concern about directors' remuneration, news of the Unipart schemes could come at a sensitive time. Shareholders are said to be

split over a bid from the company's former owners, Rover, thought to be around £300m. The bid has been rebuffed, but a higher one is now expected. Unipart said that since the Conservatives were re-elected, no-one benefitted from the arrangements. The four directors were chief executive John Neill, managing director Frank Hemsworth and two others, Tony Mourque and Muir Moffat. Mr Neill currently earns £490,000 a year, and the others between £190,000 and £330,000 according to the latest annual report.

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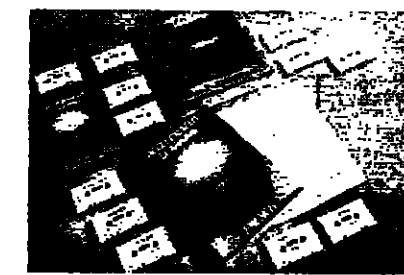
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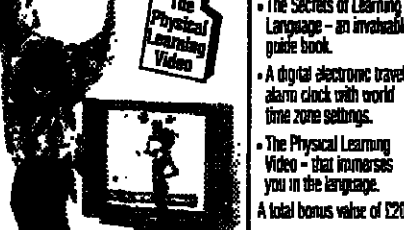
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The best footballer in Brazil is packing his bags and preparing to move to Middlesbrough. He talked exclusively to **Phil Davison**

At home with Juninho

They nicknamed him Juninho, Little Junior, immediately after he was born. At 5ft 5in and only eight and a half stone, he still lives up to the name. Had he been born around Newmarket, instead of in the world's second-biggest city, he might just have used his build and exceptional balance to become a jockey.

In a simple, lower middle-class home in the São Paulo suburb of Parque São Lucas, Oswaldo Girdolo Junior, alias Juninho, was packing his bags this week to emigrate to another, smaller industrial city he has trouble finding on a map and whose name he can barely pronounce. The 22-year-old Brazilian midfielder sensation doesn't drink, but when he says "Meedleshbrow" he sounds for all the world like a "Boro fan who's had a pint too many."

All he knows is that his new home will be "cold, rainy, somewhere in the North, not

'Cold, rainy, somewhere in the North, not far from Newcastle. And they play in red'

Juninho on what he knows of Middlesbrough



no fewer than five or six full meals a day and it's a habit he's kept up. The nearest McDonald's to his new home can look forward to a significant boost in profits when Little Junior hits what will surely soon be dubbed Rio de Tees.

Although Zico, who played for Rio's Flamengo, was his hero, Juninho followed the Palmeiras side as a boy. While São Paulo Football Club has largely middle-class support, and the other local team Corinthians is mostly followed by the working class, Palmeiras has the support of the city's huge population of Italian origin, descendants of 19th century coffee workers.

Rooting for Palmeiras kept the young Juninho in conflict with schoolfriends many of whom were in the Girdolo family home this week to wish him a tearful farewell. "Saudade" (roughly translatable as "we'll miss you") was the word on everybody's lips.

'I used to watch him on TV, study his moves and tricks and rush out to try the same until I got it right'

Juninho on his admiration for Zico

far from Newcastle and they play in red." He's not too worried. São Paulo is a far cry from the Copacabana. He grew up playing in the sidestreets off São Paulo's busy Oratório Avenue, or indoors like most English kids. Not on the beaches. And São Paulo, at 2,500 feet or the height of Verbier's busiest ski runs, can get pretty damp and chilly of a night.

As for Middlesbrough's red jersey, that's considered the luckiest of colours here. Superstitious residents put red carpets at their doors or hang red ribbons from their car mirrors to ward off "the evil eye." Juninho's been to London, where he first attracted the attention of Middlesbrough's manager, Bryan Robson, when he scored in Brazil's 3-1 Umbro Cup victory, to Birmingham, for another Umbro Cup match, and to Liverpool. "The national squad had a day off so we went up to visit the city that gave the world the Beatles," he told me. But he'd never heard of Middlesbrough until a determined gentleman he calls "Mr Robson" (the Brazilian "r" comes out like our "h") came calling this summer.

He gave me a "première" by donning a Middlesbrough

jersey given to him by Robson when he signed him up last week from São Paulo for a Brazilian record £4.75m. I asked him how much he himself got. "The player gets 15 per cent," came the reply. That makes him a dollar millionaire and you can make that a pound millionaire once he picks up his first pay cheque and sponsorship deals.

The amiable 22-year-old said his immediate ambition was to help get Middlesbrough into the UEFA Cup. As we chatted on a sofa in the simply furnished living room where he lives with his parents and only sister, a Brazilian O Globo TV reporter, doing a piece to camera in the corner, was describing him as "the new Pele." It's a tag that has stuck mainly because Juninho is young, skilled and wears the No 10 shirt. But he doesn't like it.

"That's a huge responsibility," he said of the comparisons with the great Brazilian. "I think I only scored nine or 10 for São Paulo last season. My childhood idol was Zico, when he played for Flamengo. I'd rather be compared with him."

I used to watch him on TV, study his moves and tricks and rush out to try the same

until I got it right." With his balance, vision and free-kick ability, Juninho conjures up memories of Zico. Off the pitch, he has an honesty and quiet intensity reminiscent of the young Robson himself.

Juninho never saw the former England captain play. It was Robson's belief in him, his persistence and his infectious ambitions for Middlesbrough that led him to sign, he said. "The Brazilian press kept saying Arsenal, Chelsea, Everton etc were interested in me. I'd ask my manager and he'd say there had been no approaches. Mr Robson was the only one to make a concrete offer."

He likes the way Brazilians play. I think he wants his team to play like that. Middlesbrough have invested a lot. They're growing and want to grow more," he said as he settled down to watch Brazil play Uruguay in a friendly.

To get to the UEFA Cup, even to get a sniff of the ball from his team-mates, Juninho is going to have to brush up his English with a private teacher organised by Robson. The O Globo TV reporter asked him what was English for the Portuguese "bófia." Just taking off the "a" must have seemed too simple.



Small wonder: Juninho (top) sits on the family sofa pointing to himself in a photograph of the Brazilian national team; and (below) in the Middlesbrough kit he will soon be wearing Photographs: Phil Davison

"Bow, bow-ool, bool. Something like that," he replied, before counting in English to 12. Going further appeared to pose problems and it may be some time before he masters the figure 25, the shirt number Middlesbrough have set aside

for him. "You are beautiful. I love you, sweet honey," he went on in lilting English. "First I learn how to talk to the girls."

That brought laughs from the assembled family members and neighbours who wandered

in and out of the Girdolo family living room as if it were a station waiting room.

Perhaps it's because success is relatively new to Juninho—he has vaulted to prominence since last year's World Cup—but there's no talk of security, bodyguards or kidnappings here. I had walked through his open car port and into his living room unannounced. When a tiny young man in a T-shirt and jeans shook my hand and offered me a cup of coffee, I thought it must be Juninho's younger brother and found myself looking round the room to try to pick the player out. But the young man was the man himself. He could pass for 16.

He and his father, Oswaldo Sr, a 46-year-old sales representative at a steel manufacturers, are flying to England on Sunday for a medical. They will come back during the week to pick up his mother, 38-year-old Lucia, and return to Middlesbrough on Sunday week to pick one of four rentable houses Robson has set aside. Juninho's only sibling, 21-year-old sister Gislene will join them next February after completing her computer science studies.

"I'll go with Gislene in February but only for a couple of

months," said Juninho's grandmother, 66-year-old Rosa Girdolo as she prepared a *feijoada*, a pork and bean casserole. Juninho's favourite dish. "I'm his biggest fan. He was my first grandchild so I helped bring him up," she said, showing me family snapshots of a three-year-old Juninho kicking a football.

"My biggest preoccupation is the food," Juninho's mother told me. "We'll be together as a family so that will make it easier. But I'll be bringing plenty of real coffee, plenty of beans."

After signing him in 1993, when he was a part-timer for the Ituano club, Tele Santana, the São Paulo manager, put Juninho on a special diet to help him grow and fill out. He went from 5ft 1in to his current 5ft 5in and from eight to eight and a half stone. That entailed

Juninho wasn't packing much. But he planned to carry a ball as hand baggage "just in case." It's an old habit. "We'd give him toys, model cars, you name it, but he never touched them. All he ever played with was a ball," his mother said. "I'm so proud of him, that God gave me a son like this. He's a simple boy and humble."

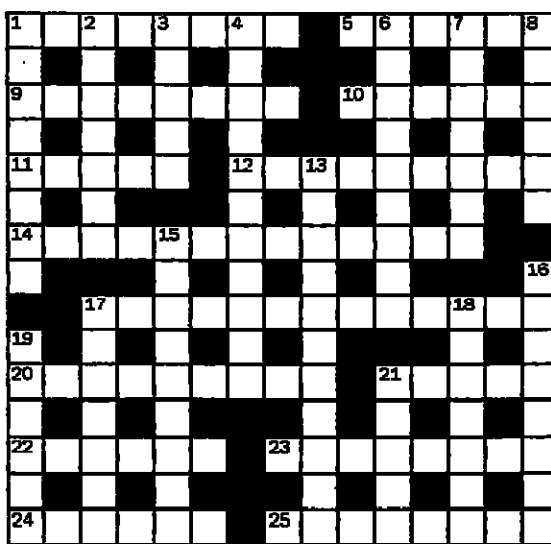
Among those bidding him farewell was a dark-haired beauty called Daniela, president of the Juninho fan club, an organisation Giggles-like in its proportion of female members. Juninho is one of Brazil's most eligible bachelors but he doesn't like staying away from Middlesbrough discotheques "if there are any. No girl means one problem less," he said with a smile.

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 2884, Friday 13 October

By Phil

Thursday's solution



DOWNHILL SUMMER
UNUSUALLY
ASTOUNDING
CATCHUP
CARE
INTERESTING
TOPSAIL
STRENGTH
ENTRUST
SOPHISM
GIRL
LAME
TROUBLE
SHUN
OPPOSITE
UNHEALTHY
CURE
TIME
BATTERED

ACROSS

- 1 Leader of society amongst Macs not hybridised (8)
- 5 Achilles' mother is following the Cross? (6)
- 9 A fresh medical treatment without need for initial opening? (8)
- 10 Batsman with single run, needing to have put in training (6)
- 11 Detailed plan gets one in to hold meeting (5)
- 12 Group sharing beliefs of ailing former politician (9)
- 14 Confrontation between two? (7,5)
- 17 Depend upon something uncertain to put the bubbles on the tree? (4,2,1,6)
- 20 The sailor gets trampled in the rush (9)

- 21 Another answer holds this reversed word meaning 'trap' (5)
 - 22 Extract a bit of evidence following legal process (6)
 - 23 Causing irritation, as I have snatched an item of lingerie (8)
 - 24 Say soldiers in retreat appear (6)
 - 25 Respectful and always filling a gap (8)
- DOWN
- 1 The main picture? (8)
 - 2 Girl, in a month, may come to make too much of the part (7)
 - 3 Musical instrument is taken up by sailor (5)
 - 4 Barbara lewdly embraces a scoundrel - it has a magical effect! (11)

- 6 Game for nimble feet - hard work on the booze (9)
- 7 Excavation producing cash for me? (3-4)
- 8 Holy man doing well, as it were, to take a walk (5)
- 13 One in variety of a naval blue is not for sale? (11)
- 15 Longing for anger in HK to dissipate (9)
- 16 Christian, say, in the Christian era, taking this position over New Testament (8)
- 17 Girl's individual about forenoon, in intercity - this one? (7)
- 18 Put money away after rise? I have, trying to avoid tax, say (7)
- 19 Good idea gets cry of glee and zeal? Not half (6)
- 21 Most excellent drug gives you a fixed expression (5)

Three World Cup players expelled for drug abuse

Rugby League
DAVE HADFIELD

Three players have been thrown out of the World Cup after failing drug tests. The most serious of the cases casting a cloud over the success of the centenary tournament is the South African, Pierre Grobbelaar, who has tested positive for the anabolic steroid, nandrolone.

The revelation has caused a rift in the South Africa camp, with the coach, Tony Fisher claiming, he had been "kept in the dark" by his chairman.

Syd Eru, the New Zealand hooker, tested positive for pseudophedrine after the game against Tonga at Warrington on Sunday. Pseudophedrine is a banned substance under the Sports Council's testing regime, but occurs in some over-the-counter cold remedies. Two Australian players have registered that they have been prescribed drugs containing it.

The third player caught is the Frenchman, Stephane Millet, who has tested positive for cannabis. His actions had "brought a stigma" to the nation's rugby league, said the

France manager, Tas Baitieri. Neither Grobbelaar nor Millet, who has already gone home injured, have played in the tournament, but have been detected by the World Cup policy of testing all players from every country. All players, apart from the South Africans, were also tested before even leaving home.

Fisher said: "I was told Pierre had a shoulder injury and that was why he was not playing. I was never told anything about anabolic steroids or tests and I have not seen Pierre since Tuesday. I have been kept in the dark by the chairman, but I will be concentrating on continuing to coach the players who are still with me."

Eru, the 24-year-old Auckland Warriors player, who has been capped six times, is a serious loss to New Zealand, as the only specialist hooker in their squad. The New Zealand coach, Frank Endacott, yesterday denied any knowledge of Eru's test result, but said that he had already ruled him out of tonight's match against Papua New Guinea with a groin strain that could in any case have forced him out of the whole tournament.

The veteran half-back Gary Freeman will come into an unfamiliar position as emergency replacement.

The New Zealand camp would make no other comment on the news from the World Cup organisers beyond saying that they would take 24 hours to consider the situation.

All three players are now banned from playing in the tournament, although any further punishment is the province of their national leagues.

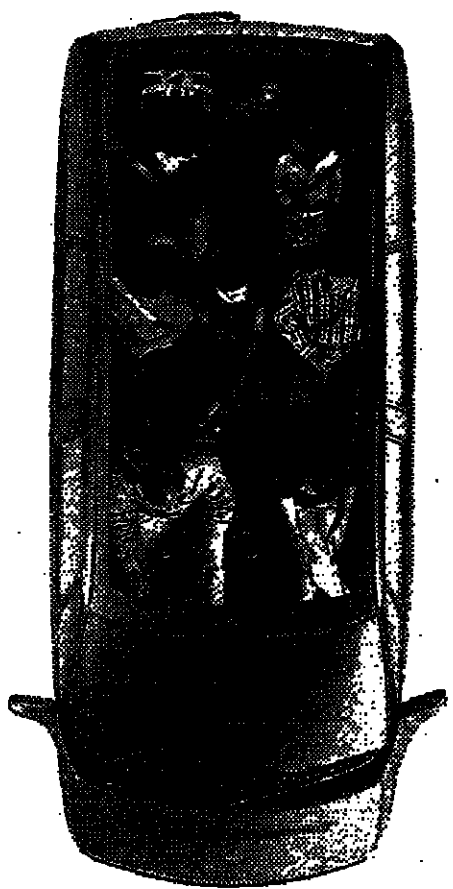
Baitieri said: "Stephane Millet was a late inclusion. He replaced an injured player. He had been at a party on the Friday and thought he wasn't going to go to the World Cup, but then he got the call-up the night before we left. It's unfortunate he did what he did. It was out of character."

"It's going to cost him dearly and he's very upset about it, because he knows he has ruined his reputation and brought a stigma to French rugby league and to the World Cup. He's very apologetic. He's a young kid with a black mark against his name and he's going to have to work hard to get back."

World Cup news, page 30

7. DOWN.

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